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ST MATTHEW XXII. TO ST. MARK XVI.

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INTRODUCTION.

ST. MARK.

THE principal Commentary is that of Dr. James Morison: to it all subsequent writers have been much indebted, and it contains almost everything necessary to the full understanding of the Gospel. Mr. Richard Glover's Commentary, published by the Sunday School Union, is bright and suggestive. Dean Chadwick's book, in the "Expositor's Bible," covers the whole ground, and abounds in fresh suggestions. Canon Luckock's "Footprints of the Son of Man" is well worth consulting; and Dr. Hanna, in his "Life of Our Lord," pays special attention to St. Mark.

84
84

ST. MATTHEW XXII.–XXVIII.

REFERENCES: xxii. 1-14.—R. Calderwood, *The Parables of our Lord*, p. 113; A. B. Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 259, *W. M. Taylor, Parables of our Saviour*, p. 149; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 296.

Chap. xxii., ver. 2.—"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son."

THE marriage of Christ is the mystery of the Church, and it belongs to the initiated. To those who stand in the outer circle of thought it is a word and a fable. To those who are within it is the simplest and the grandest of all possible realities.

I. Consider how thisunion, of which all marriage is the intended allegory, actualy takes place between Him and us. The first mover is, as it ought to be, the Lord Jesus Christ. The wife does not seek her husband, but the husband seeks his wife. Gradually, by His own sweet constraints, and the outgoings of His Spirit to us, we begin to love Him. And then come the early betrothals of a heart made willing—the moving of holy desires and of sacred yearnings. And then the contract—that indissoluble contract which is between Christ and the believer, strong as adamant.

II. Note the conditions of the union. In the presence of witnesses the covenant of marriage must be ratified. And so here angels and the Church look on when Christ, before the whole universe, confesses you, and will confess you, to be His for ever. And you, on your part, must confess Him before Christians, before the world, before angels, before all men. The mutual confession is the basis of the stipulation.

III. And with common consent it must be. Free as the wind was His choice of you; absolute and explicit must be your surrender to Him. No compulsion, no outside circumstances, no secondary motive will avail. It must be your own independent, unbiassed will, the full accord of your whole heart.

It is a compact of perfect affection, absolute duty, untiring allegiance. The soul of all attachment to you is Christ. It is a relation of the most exquisite fondness, but it is a relation of the most unqualified obedience.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 9th series, p. 193.

Chap. xxii., vers. 2-7.

OUR Lord's parable has fulfilled itself again and again in history, and will fulfil itself as long as foolish and rebellious persons exist on earth. This is one of the laws of the kingdom of Heaven. It must be so, for it arises by necessity out of the character of Christ, the King of Heaven—infinite bounty and generosity; but if that bounty be despised and insulted, or still more, if it be outraged by wanton tyranny or cruelty, then—for the benefit of the rest of mankind—awful severity. So it is, and so it must be, simply because God is good.

I. The king in the parable was very angry, as he had a right to be. Let us lay that to heart, and tremble, from the very worst of us all to the very best of us all. There is an anger in God. There is indignation in God. An awful thought, and yet a blessed thought. Under God's anger, or under God's love, we must be, whether we will or not. We cannot flee from His presence. We cannot go from His Spirit. If we are loving, and so rise up to heaven, God is there—in love. If we are cruel and wrathful, and so go down to hell, God is there also—in wrath. With the clean He will be clean; with the froward man He will be froward. On us, and us alone, it depends whether we shall live under God's anger or live under God's love.

II. We pride ourselves on our superior light and our improved civilization, and look down on the old Roman Catholic missionaries, who converted our forefathers from heathendom in the middle ages. These men made mistakes, and often worse than mistakes, for they were but men. But if they had not had a deep and sound belief that they were in the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Heaven—and that they and all men must obey the laws of the kingdom of Heaven; and that the first law of it was that wrong-doing would be punished, and right-doing rewarded in this life every day, and all day long, as sure as Christ, the living Lord, reigned in righteousness over all the earth: if they had not believed that and acted on it, we should probably have been heathen at this day. Let us lay this to

heart with seriousness and godly fear. For so we shall look up with reverence, and yet with hope, to Christ the ascended King, to whom all power is given in heaven and earth.

C. KINGSLEY, *All Saints' Day and other Sermons*, p. 274.

REFERENCES: xxii. 2.—F. D. Maurice, *Sermons in Country Churches*, p. 62. xxii. 2, 3.—C. Girdlestone, *A Course of Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 411; R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 235. xxii. 2-4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 975. xxii. 3.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 265. xxii. 4.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 208. xxii. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 98. xxii. 8.—H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 245. xxii. 8-10.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 47. xxii. 10.—E. H. Bradby, *Sermons at Haileybury*, p. 85.

Chap. xxii., vers. 11, 12.

THE Guest without the Wedding Garment.

I. The service of Christ requires qualifications. Many may be attracted to the service who shrink from obtaining these necessary qualifications. Yet they may for a long time pass muster, and they may even bring themselves to believe that they have a right to pass muster. Their conceptions of the qualifications required may be utterly inadequate, till a light suddenly flashes in on their conscience, to convict, to expose, and to condemn. Now what do we mean by the expression "not having a wedding garment?" What is the kind of disqualification which is here indicated? There is but one qualification for the presence of Christ—faith in Christ. We must honestly wish to be Christ's servants. We must *trust* to His love and power to make us so.

II. Note the danger of appearing in Christ's presence without the true qualification. Faith in Christ has been presented to us not as a cold dogma, not as a badge of party, not as the devout but somewhat effeminate antagonist to an honest and calumniated reason; but as the guiding rule of lives which we are sure must be pleasing to God. If we have not gathered from the Bible the true nature of that wedding garment in which the redeemed of Christ must appear before their Master it is our own neglect. We, too, shall inevitably be *speechless* when the question is put to us: How camest thou in hither? We are not tempted to be unbelievers; or rather, that is not the main temptation of our day: we are tempted to be dishonest Christians; we are tempted to let our Christianity influence everything—our tastes, our prejudices, our professions—

everything but our hearts. But it is on these that Christ looks. He sees at a glance whether they are cold or warm.

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, 1st series, p. 387.

REFERENCES: xxii. 11, 12.—D. Moore, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3,209; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 241. xxii. 11-13.—E. Cooper, *Practical Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 262. xxii. 11-14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 976. xxii. 12.—J. Edmunds, *Sermons in a Village Church*, 2nd series, p. 303.

Chap. xxii., ver. 14.—"For many are called, but few are chosen."

WE have to do in the text not with an arbitrary call and an arbitrary choice, as if God called many in mockery, meaning to choose out of them only a few, and making His choice independently of any exertion of theirs. The picture is very different; it is a gracious call to us all to come and receive the blessing; it is a reluctant casting out the greatest part of us, because we would not render ourselves fit for it.

I. We have all been called, in a Christian sense, inasmuch as we have all been introduced into Christ's Church by Baptism; and a very large proportion of us have been called again at our Confirmation. We have been thus called to enter into Christ's kingdom; we have been called to lead a life of holiness and happiness from this time forth even for ever.

II. Now, if this be the prize to which we are called, who are they who are also chosen to it? (1) In the first and most complete sense, no doubt, those who have entered into their rest; who are in no more danger, however slight; with whom the struggle is altogether past, the victory securely won. (2) Those we may call chosen who, having heard their call, have turned to obey it, and have gone on following it. (3) Those are chosen who, having found in themselves the sin which did most easily beset them, have struggled with it, and wholly, or in a great measure, have overcome it.

III. What is the proportion between those who are chosen and those who are called only? This I dare not answer; there is a good as well as an evil which is unseen by the world at large, unseen even by all but those who watch us most nearly and most narrowly. All we can say is, that there are too many who, we must fear, are not chosen; there are too few of whom we can feel sure that they are.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 101.

REFERENCES: xxii. 14.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 18. xxii. 15-22.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i.,

p. 468. xxii. 15-46.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 131. xxii. 16.—W. M. Statham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 458. xxii. 16-22.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 336. xxii. 20.—A. Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, p. 133. xxii. 20, 21.—A. P. Stanley, *Church Sermons*, vol. i., p. 10.

Chap. xxii., ver. 21.—"Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

Sacrifice to Cæsar or to God.

I. The only Cæsar which we have to fear nowadays is called Public Opinion—the huge, anonymous idol which we ourselves help to make, and then tremble before the creation of our own cowardice; whereas, if we will but face him, in the fear of God and the faith of Christ, determined to say the thing which is true, and do the thing which is right, we shall find the modern Cæsar but a phantom of our own imagination—a tyrant, indeed, as long as he is feared, but a coward as soon as he is defied. To that Cæsar let us never bow the knee. Render to him all that he deserves—the homage of common courtesy, common respectability, common charity—not in reverence for his wisdom and strength, but in pity for his ignorance and weakness. But render always to God the things which are God's. That duty lies on us as on all mankind still, from our cradle to our grave, and after that through all eternity. Let us go back, or rather, let us go home to the eternal laws of God, which were ages before we were born, and will be ages after we are dead—to the everlasting rock on which we all stand, which is the will and mind of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to whom all power is given (as He said Himself) in heaven and in earth.

II. There are three sacrifices which every man, woman, and child can offer, and should offer, however lowly, however uneducated in what the world calls education nowadays. Of these sacrifices our Lord Himself said: The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. Now, what are these spiritual sacrifices? (1) First and foremost, surely, the sacrifice of repentance, of which it is written: "The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." (2) Next, the sacrifice of thankfulness, of which it is written: "I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord." (3) Lastly, the sacrifice of righteousness, of which it is written: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

C. Kingsley, *All Saints' Day and Other Sermons*, p. 378.

I. These words have two aspects, as they had, we must believe, two purposes. In the first place, they were an answer to the Herodians and Pharisees, and their question had not been an honest one. The answer was an escape from a skilfully laid trap—a path formed where his enemies fondly hoped that all pathway was cut off. But there must be another aspect also. It cannot have been related by the Evangelists among the great sayings of that most solemn week as an instance only of adroitness in baffling human wit and malignity. It was an answer, in the first place, to a question asked with a malicious purpose. But that question might have been asked, would be asked in after days, in some form or other, by humble souls eager for guidance in real difficulties. The answer must have been meant for them too.

II. Should they give tribute to Cæsar or not? The world as they lived in it was in the hands of heathen rulers, who had crucified the Lord of Glory, and who despised or persecuted His disciples. How were Christians to live with such a society? Were they to submit to such rulers? And submitting, were they to do so cheerfully, or under protest? Christ's answer may seem to us hardly to solve such difficulties. It is an answer which has been often misunderstood, and even made to teach the lesson which it was meant to unteach. The difficulty may seem to us in any particular case to be precisely the one which it does not meet—the question: *What* is Cæsar's and *What* is God's? The answer does not meet the difficulty directly, yet it takes its sting from it. The sting of the question lies in the false views which men have taken of the meaning of our Lord's words—as though He had meant to distinguish two provinces, two claims—to set them as rivals, fronting one another, limited by one another. The point of our Lord's answer was to heal and reconcile. It was possible, it was a duty, to satisfy *both*. What is Cæsar's really is what God has given to Cæsar; and in satisfying that claim to the very fullest extent we are satisfying, so far, that larger claim which exists on all our heart and life.

E. C. Wickham, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 262.

References: xxii. 21.—C. Girdlestone, *Twenty Parochial Sermons*, 1st series, p. 171; H. G. Robinson, *Man in the Image of God*, p. 127; R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 367; J. Edmunds, *Sixty Sermons*, p. 430; H. N. Grimley, *Tremadoc Sermons*, p. 206; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 46; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 295. xxii. 29-32.—J. J. Murphy, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iv., p. 102. xxii. 30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 842;

H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, 4th series, p. 551; 5th series, p. 75. xxii. 32. —J. N. Norton, *Old Paths*, p. 468. xxii. 34-40.—H. W. Beecher, *Sermons* (1870), p. 426. xxii. 34-46.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 351; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 156. xxii. 35-40.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, vol. iv., p. 88.

Chap. xxii., ver. 36.—"Which is the great commandment in the law?"

CONSIDER the law of love as a natural force of humanity. It will help us to understand this principle if we first distinguish it from some other principles of our nature.

I. It is to be distinguished from the principle of will, and in some regards is indeed to be opposed to it. The human life and the law of human life must give us personality in man, but also a being of God. The law must give us distinction, without the isolation in which human life is impossible. And the law must give us union, for which all human life is a craving, without the confusion from which it shrinks. All human lives that are following the law of will, of self, of individualism, are breaking life's true law, and missing life's true aim.

II. The law of love is to be distinguished from the principle of knowledge. Knowledge is not a primary fact, and can never become an ultimate law of life. "Knowledge shall vanish away, but love never faileth."

III. The law of love is wholly opposed to the spirit of fear. Fear is not natural to man. Fear only came to man when tempted by knowledge. He transgressed the obedience of love, and having transgressed he hid himself from the presence of God. And Adam represents us all. We hide from God because we have sinned. When we kneel at the foot of the Cross, and feel that because God loves us we must love God, we learn again the law of life, the law of being: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy mind, and all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." That is the law of God—an unbroken actual principle. It is the law of your being. Are you living it? You cannot rest without it. You cannot, because it is the law of your being; God has made you to love Him, to have communion with Him. And in that perfect communion the law of God is not broken, and that law is, that with all your heart, with all your being, with all the powers that you have, shall you love God. Then reason shall be linked to heaven, and affection linked to heaven, and conscience linked to heaven, and idea, and imagination, and all

the powers of mind and soul linked to heaven by the eternal principle of love.

ARCHDEACON WATKINS, *Cambridge Review*, Nov. 26th, 1884.

REFERENCES: xxii. 36, 37.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,450. xxii. 36-38, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 232. xxii. 36-40. —*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 220; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 116; see also *Sermons*, 4th series, p. 205.

Chap. xxii., ver. 37.—"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . with all thy mind."

THE Mind's Love for God.

I. Is it not manifestly true that besides the love of the senses, and the love of the heart, and the love of the soul, and the love of the strength, there is also a love of the mind, without whose entrance into the completeness of the loving man's relation to the object of his love his love is not complete? Is your greatest friend contented with your love before you have come to love him with all your mind? Everywhere we find our assurances that the mind has its affections and enthusiasms, that the intellect is no cold-hearted monster who only thinks and judges, but that it glows with love, not merely perceiving, but delighted to perceive, the beauty of the things with which it has to do.

II. Christ bids His disciples to love God with all their minds. Is there not something sublimely beautiful and touching in this demand of God that the noblest part of His children's nature should come to Him? "Understand me," he seems to cry, "I am not wholly loved by you unless your understanding is searching out after My truth, and with all your powers of thoughtfulness and study you are trying to find out all you can about My nature and My ways."

III. There are ignorant saints who come very near to God, and live in the rich sunlight of His love, but none the less for that is their ignorance a detraction from their sainthood. There are mystics who, seeing how God outgoes human knowledge, choose to assume that God is not a subject of human knowledge at all. Such mystics may mount to sublime heights of unreasoning contemplation, but there is an uncompleteness in their love, because they rob one part of their nature of all share in their approach to God. Love God with all your mind, because your mind, like all the rest of you, belongs to Him; and it is not right that you should give Him only a part to whom belongs the whole. Give your intelligence to God.

Know all you can about Him. In spite of all disappointment and weakness, insist on seeing all you can see now through the glass darkly, so that hereafter you may be ready when the time for seeing face to face shall come.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Sermons in English Churches*, p. 22.

THE Beatific Vision.

I. Our feeling of the beauty of goodness comes, as St. John tells us, from Christ, the Light who is the life of men, and lights every man who comes into the world; and that light in our hearts, which makes us see, and admire, and love what is good, is none other than Christ Himself shining in our hearts, and showing to us His own likeness and the beauty thereof. But if we stop there, if we only admire what is good, without trying to copy it, we shall lose that light. Our corrupt and diseased nature will quench that heavenly spark in us more and more till it dies out—as God forbid that it should die out in any of us.

II. It is but a faint notion, no doubt, that the best men can have of God's goodness, so dull has sin made our hearts and brains; but let us comfort ourselves with this thought—that the more we learn to love what is good, the more we accustom ourselves to think of good people and good things, and to ask ourselves why and how this action and that is good, the more shall we be able to see the goodness of God. And to see that, even for a moment, is worth all sights in earth or heaven. Worth all sights, indeed. No wonder that the saints of old called it the "Beatific Vision," that is, the sight which makes a man utterly blessed; namely, to see, if but for a moment, with his mind's eye what God is like, and behold He is utterly good. No wonder that they said with St. Peter, when he saw our Lord's glory: "Lord, it is good for us to be here;" and felt like men gazing upon some glorious picture or magnificent show, off which they cannot take their eyes, and which makes them forget for the time all besides in heaven and earth. And it was good for them to be there; but not too long. Man was sent into the world not merely to see, but to do; and the more he sees, the more he is bound to go and do accordingly. St. Augustine, though he would gladly have lived and died doing nothing but fixing his soul's eye steadily on the glory of God's goodness, had to come down from the mount and work, and preach, and teach, and wear himself out in daily drudging for that God whom he learnt to serve, even when he could not

adore Him in the press of business, and the bustle of a rotten and dying world. C. KINGSLEY, *The Good News of God*, p. 1.

Chap. xxii., vers. 37, 38.

THERE are two reasons why men do not love God. For one of them there are great excuses; for the other there is no excuse whatsoever.

I. In the first place, too many find it difficult to love God, because they have not been taught that God is lovable, and worthy of their love. They have been taught dark and hard doctrines, which have made them afraid of God. They have been taught—too many are taught still—not merely that God will punish the wicked, but that God will punish nine-tenths, or ninety-nine hundredths, of the human race. That He will send to endless torments not merely sinners who have rebelled against what they knew was right, and His command; who have stained themselves with crimes, who wilfully injured their fellow-creatures: but that He will do the same by little children, by innocent young girls; by honourable, respectable, moral men and women; because they are not what is called sensibly converted, or else what is called orthodox. Often—strongest notion of all—they have been taught that, though God intends to punish them, they must still love Him, or they will be punished—as if such a notion, so far from drawing them to God, could do anything but drive them from Him. Our love must be called out by God's love. If we are to love God, it must be because He has first loved us. If we really believed that God who made heaven and earth was even now calling to each and every one of us, and beseeching us, by the sacrifice of His well beloved Son, crucified for us, "My son, give Me thine heart," we could not help giving up our hearts to Him.

II. Provided—and there is that second reason why people do not love God, in which I said there was no excuse—provided only that we wish to be good, and to obey God. If we do not wish to do what God commands we shall never love God. It must be so. There can be no real love of God which is not based upon the love of virtue and goodness, upon what our Lord calls a hunger and thirst after righteousness. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" is our Lord's own rule and text. C. KINGSLEY, *The Water of Life*, p. 214.

REFERENCES: xxii. 37.—H. N. Grimley, *Tremadoc Sermons*, p. 212; C. Taylor, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. vi., p. 363; S. Macnaughton, *Real Religion and Real Life*, p. 85; E. Bersier, *Sermons*.

2nd series, p. 176. xxii. 37-40.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 229; see also *Plymouth Pulpit*, 10th series, p. 7. xxii. 39.—G. Macdonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, p. 189; C. Kingsley, *The Good News of God*, p. 41.

Chap. xxii., ver. 42.—"What think ye of Christ?"

I. Some people do not think much about Him any way. Their minds are pre-occupied; they think of something else.

II. Some do think, and now it is of much importance that we inquire what they think. (1) There is a *historic* ideal of Christ. It admits all the facts of His biography. I do not think it helps one's salvation, or cleanses his nature, any more than did the love and longing of the Ancient Britons who believed that Arthur had achieved matchless excellence, and who fondly anticipated his return one time to gather his knights anew at the remembered Round Table. (2) There is also a *theologic* ideal of Christ. Such a conception, when left alone, is only enough to render an individual a mere polemic, or disputant. A cold and cheerless dogmatism is the result. (3) There is a *poetic* ideal of Christ. It is not so much Jesus Christ that these enthusiasts love as the imaginative picture of Christ which they invest with all that their hearts admire. (4) There is an *evangelic* ideal of Christ. The result here is a *career*. The man sees the one peerless life in the New Testament moving before him; he has no wish more pervading and swaying than simply to become like it, and plant his own feet in the prints of the beloved Master's.

III. Ideals control life. Some say it makes no difference what a man believes if he is only sincere in his faith. Alas! it makes all the difference in the world. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he; character decides destiny too. So the more sincere one is, if he be in error, the worse it is for him. "What think ye of Christ?" Observe that by-and-bye this great question of the ages will be reversed; and then it will be of the highest moment to ask: What does Christ think of *me?*

C. S. Robinson, *Sermons on Neglected Texts*, p. 206.

References: xxii. 42.—G. Calthrop, *Pulpit Recollections*, p. 101; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 105; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 366; *Ibid., Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1,093. xxiii. 5.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 158. xxiii. 8.—J. H. Thom, *Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ*, p. 199; F. W. Aveling, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 385. xxiii. 8-10.—A. Harnack, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 322. xxiii. 8-12.—A. Scott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 116; *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 184.

xxiii. 12.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 10; B. F. Westcott, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 461. xxiii. 15.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 323; G. E. L. Cotton, *Sermons to English Congregations in India*, p. 114.

Chap. xxiii., ver. 17.—"Whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?"

The Visible Temple.

I. A Temple there has been upon earth, a spiritual Temple, made up of living stones—a Temple, as I may say, composed of souls. This Temple is invisible, but it is perfect and real because it is invisible, and gains nothing in perfection by possessing visible tokens. There needs no outward building to meet the eye, in order to make it more of a Temple than it already is in itself. God and Christ and angels—souls, are not these a heavenly court, all perfect to which this world can add nothing? This is true and ever to be borne in mind; and yet no one can deny on the other hand, that a great object of Christ's coming was to subdue the world, to claim it as His own, to assert His right as its Master, to show Himself to all men, and to take possession. When He came He had not a place to lay His head; but He came to make Himself a place, to make Himself a home, to fashion for Himself a glorious dwelling out of the whole world which the powers of evil had taken captive. He was not born in the Temple of Jerusalem; He abhorred the palace of David; He laid Himself on the damp earth in the cold night, a Light shining in a dark place, till by the virtue that went out of Him He should erect a Temple worthy of His Name.

II. And lo! in omen of the future, even in His cradle, the rich and wise of the earth seek Him with gold, and frankincense, and myrrh as an offering. Pass a few generations and the whole face of things is changed; the earth is covered with His temples, as it has been for ages. Go where you will, you find the eternal mountains hewn and fashioned into shrines where He may dwell who was an outcast in the days of His flesh. The invisible temple has become visible, and He has made Him a temple, not only out of inanimate things, but of men also as parts of it. Not gold and silver, jewels and fine linen, and skill of man to use them, make the house of God, but worshippers: the souls and bodies of men whom He has redeemed.

III. The temple is greater than the gold, therefore care not though the gold be away; it sanctifies it, therefore cherish the gold while it is present. Christ is with us, though there be no

outward show. Where He really places His Name, there—be the spot a palace or a cottage—it is sacred and glorious. He accepts our gold and our silver, not to honour Himself thereby, but in mercy to us.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 280.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 18.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 99. xxiii. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 831. xxiii. 22.—R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 248.

Chap. xxiii., ver. 23.—"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

WE learn from the text:—

I. That the commands of God are of different degrees of importance. There are matters of more weight than others among the Divine precepts. That God has commanded a thing always invests it with a certain importance, but all His commandments are not of equal gravity. There are higher and lower obligations; and the higher will be first attended to, nay, if need be, will absorb into them the lower.

II. The weightiest of all God's commands have respect to judgment, mercy, and faith. That is a truth which is emphasized over and over again by the prophets in the Old Testament, and the Apostles in the New. The inner is more important than the outer; the spirit than the letter; the principle than the action; the character than the isolated deed. The heart is the great thing, for out of it are the issues of life; and therefore it should have the first and the greatest attention. If that be wrong, nothing can be right; but if that be right, everything will partake of its quality.

III. Attention to the matters of less importance will not compensate for the neglect of those which are of essential moment. Punctilious tithe-paying will not condone oppression, or injustice, or the lack of humble faith in God. Ritual is not religion: it is only, even at the best, the outer garment which she wears on certain occasions; but religion herself is character, and that is a moral unit, giving its quality both to the worship and to the ordinary conduct of the man. It is no vindication for not doing a most important duty, to say that I have done something else that is on a far lower plain.

IV. Where the heart is right with God through faith in Jesus Christ, both the weightier matters and those of less importance

will be attended to. The performance of one duty must not be pleaded as an excuse for the neglect of another. In all such matters what is put before us is not an alternative—whether we shall do this or that—but an aggregate, for we are to do this *and* that. W. M. TAYLOR, *Contrary Winds*, p. 356.

I. ON closer observation, the sins of the Pharisees resolve themselves chiefly into four—Pride, hypocrisy, superstition, and a dislike to real spiritual religion. To understand Christ's feelings and actions towards them, you must remember that the men who committed these sins were the enlightened ones of the earth. They knew their Bibles wonderfully. They had the Name and Word of God constantly on their lips. And the cause of truth and of God was committed to them. Hence Christ's exceeding severity with these men. For there are two points on which Christ was always most jealous: the one was the glory of the Father; and the other the interests of religion, and especially the consciences of young believers. Whatever compared with these, whatever offended against these and hurt them, was sure to awake Christ's holy anger, and incur His awful malediction. And this is exactly what pride and hypocrisy, superstition and severity, do. Therefore Christ's utter revulsion of a Pharisee.

II. (1) God is in His holy temple, and all creation lies—poor and sinful—at His feet. Whatever lifts itself up offends against God's holiness, and rebels against God's sovereignty. Hence Christ's detestation of a Pharisee. (2) And the characteristic of our religion as a test of everything is *reality*. There is no false sheen thrown upon any part of God's creation. The beauty of the interior generally exceeds the beauty of the exterior. God in His work and in His truth is all real. He abhors hollowness. Hence Christ's woe to a Pharisee. (3) Truth is always simple. Superstition complicates and clouds God's great, simple plan. Therefore God repudiates it. (4) God is one God, therefore He loves unity because it is His own reflection; therefore he hates all separation. All sitting aloof, all unkind feeling towards brethren, all party spirit—is offensive to God; and this is just what the Pharisees did. Hence again, the rejection and curse of a Pharisee.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 11th series, p. 109.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 23.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 9th series, p. 109. xxiii. 23, 29.—D. Fraser, *The Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 181. xxiii. 31-2.—F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 401. xxiii. 32.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 55. xxiii. 34-9.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 347.

Chap. xxiii., ver. 37.—"How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

I. One of the first things which strikes young children as they begin to grow up and look abroad in the world, is the wonderful parental instinct, as it is called, of dumb creatures—that secret and silent law which makes the mother of every animal, almost, so earnestly and affectionately watch over her offspring. Now here our Saviour teaches us that this instinct is not only put into their hearts by Him, but that it is actually a sign and token from Him—a pledge and visible shadow of the peculiar mercy, with which He watches over His Church. Look at the whole history of God's ancient people, Israel. It is nothing from beginning to end but a course of these parental providences. Everywhere the Lord offers to gather them under His wings.

II. For us it is easier to understand how truly this comparison of the hen describes God's mercy to each of us one by one. (1) First, our mother's love, that earliest and sweetest kindness that we are permitted to taste on earth. Whence comes it? Is it not altogether God's gift. Whatever our mothers did for us, and whatever love it was in their hearts to show us, God alone put it in their hearts; it was but a drop from the overflowing fountain of His love. (2) Again, what shall we say of our spiritual mother the Church? Who can count the number of the fourth part of the graces and lovingkindnesses which He through her is ever bestowing upon us? But our Lord's words remind us of one particular action of the mother-bird—the spreading her wings to receive and shelter the young ones, when they want warmth, or rest, or protection. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!" So the Holy Dove, the Spirit of Christ, comes down and broods over the waters of baptism, over the souls and bodies of those who are there to be new born, or having been so, comes to them continually in more and more warmth, strength, and life. Christ by His Holy Spirit broods over them, sheltering, warming, quickening, doing all that they need. And in order to do this, observe He gathers them. He gathers us into His holy Church. It is there that His wings are spread, other places have no promise of the same heavenly and life-giving shadow.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. viii., p. 151.

THE Saviour's Sorrow over Lost Men.

I. Words like these, spoken at such a moment, let us see, as far as words can do, into the innermost of Jesus' heart. They are a wonderful expression of His deep-seated desire to save from ruin the worst of men, to save the unwilling, to save to the very last. (1) If ever excess of guilt could have alienated the Saviour, and steeled Him against mercy, it must have been Jerusalem's. Her privileges had been surpassing. The centre of God's worship, the capital of God's elect, to her citizens revelations had been given with a prodigality which almost wearies us. Nothing could exceed her advantages except her crimes. (2) If sinners' sins cannot destroy Christ's willingness to save them, neither can their unwillingness to be saved. Refusal does not overbear this extraordinary desire of God to save us. Neither (3) can delay outweary it. On the contrary, time only tests to the utmost the sincerity of the Divine mercy. The perseverance of the Saviour is the measure of His love.

II. This language of the departing Saviour tells us how He blesses those who will be gathered. Strong love like His is gentle as it is strong. Only let the mighty Lover who made you gather you to Himself, and you will see how He will cradle you like a mother. For when these bursting words of His tell what He would have done with Jerusalem's citizens, if they would have let Him, they shed light into such secret nests of home tenderness and of low, sweet love, that nothing can be more precious or more wonderful. What wouldest thou, Lord? "I would have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." The very image has its own softness in it. To be sure, it was nothing new to speak of God's care for men as the wings of a bird. Of old, as Moses sang before he died, Israel had been carried by Jehovah across pathless sand-drifts, as an eagle's fledglings are borne upon her strong, broad pinions through the desert air—softly carried, safely, grandly, to its rest. To the faithful of later ages, Jehovah's perpetual keeping was symbolised in the widespread golden wings of cherubim, which cast their shade down upon the mercy-seat of the most holy place, and under that covert pious Hebrew souls were taught to nestle. But these were both majestic types, removed from familiar human things. In the hands of Him who brought divinity down into the bosom of an earthly home, the image grew far lowlier. The fowl of motherly instinct which nestles close upon the ground, and gives of all feathered creatures our homeliest pictures of domestic care—she

is His choice; and of all acts of that kindly mother-hen, her most intimate and secret act of love. Ah! it was like the meekness of Jesus to speak thus; and to any fearful, heartbroken evildoer, whose soul craves yet hardly dares to hope for sympathy, is it not heartening to be told in lowly words that you may creep under the mighty shadow of the crucified Redeemer of the world with such confidence as the chicken to its mother's wing?

III. The words of the text give deeper insight still into the Redeemer's heart. Underneath the joy of salvation, it touches a fount of tears. It is, in truth, His last wail of sorrow over men who would not be saved. Who knows the bitterness of love that is unprized and useless? When God weeps to win His children back from crime and ruin, and His children laugh and will not, I know no words to sorrow in, but only tears. Love weeps when justice smites. The Lamb sorrows in His wrath. And it only makes justice the more awful when you see that it has so much of pity in it, and so little of poor personal triumph or ungenerous readiness, that the Judge yearns and wails over the soul He dooms.

J. Oswald Dykes, *Sermons*, p. 356.

I. Consider the enormity of the sins of which a society may be guilty, beyond the will of any individual man to be found there. Jerusalem had slain the prophets; she had overlaid the Law of God with human inventions. The Scriptures told them of Messiah, and He passed before their very eyes, yet they could not see Him. When an impure woman was to be condemned, our Lord saw that there was not out of a crowd of accusers even one whose conscience would not reprove him as guilty of the very same sin.

II. It is remarkable, too, that the social state is worse than any one man—even the wickedest—would wish to make it. In the ancient and the modern world each offender knows that his particular form of vice can only be practised so long as it is not too common—each is ready to condemn the vices which he does not affect. Yet when the various forces of selfishness work together, they do in fact strengthen one another. And on the great aggregate of human wickedness the watchful eye of the Almighty looks down—not with pleasure, His wrath is kindling against us as a consuming fire.

III. But this guilt, real as it is, is often accompanied by a profound unconsciousness. We, with our well-meant cant about national greatness, and the blessings of a Christian country and

and the like, do shut our eyes wilfully to fearful signs of evil within.

IV. It is true that a nation goes through a moral probation, as a man does; that up to a certain point she has her opportunities of retrieval, after this sin is finished and brings forth death. Jerusalem slept not less soundly the day after the Crucifixion than the day before; nor were her markets less thronged, nor the proud carriage of her priests at all abated. Yet the transactions of one week had altered utterly the condition of that place. In God's hand is the sudden thunderbolt that shatters in a moment, and the decay that eats slowly for centuries. But once more, evil itself is punishment and destruction, fraud and wrong-doing are the bandits that steal about and rob you; drunkenness, gambling, impurity, are the monsters that dash your sons and daughters against the stones. But remember that sin, great and potent as it seems, is a conquered kingdom; it looks menacing, its numbers are legion, but the victory gained over it by our Lord was a real victory, and its strength is ready to crumble away when it is touched in earnest. Blessed are all those who make themselves instruments in such a work of love.

ARCHBISHOP THOMSON, *Lincoln's Inn Sermons*, p 356

THE Invitation refused.

I. To the great fact of God's continual, efficient calls every man's own conscience is the best witness. Doubtless these calls fall louder and deeper sometimes on the spiritual ear than they fall at other times. They lie thickest, I believe, in early life. There are states of mind we can scarcely say how, and there are providential scenes we can scarcely say why, which give an intensity to those many voices—when a verse of Scripture will sometimes roll its meaning like thunder, or when a whisper of the soul will carry an accent tenfold with it. But the call is not confined to these specialities. There is a finger of a man's hand, which is always waking the strings of thought. It is when we lie down; it is when we rise up; it is when we sit in the house; it is when we are walking by the way. Perhaps not a room in which we have ever lain down to sleep; perhaps not a church into which we have ever entered, even with careless foot; perhaps not a sin which we ever deliberately did; perhaps not an incident for weal or woe, that lies on the chequered path of life—but there was something there that swelled that "how often."

II. Some there are who will rise up and say, "I do not consider that I have ever yet been called." And these divide themselves into two classes: (1) Those who wish they could believe that they had been called, but cannot bring their mind to think that anything so good has happened to them, as that God should so remember and desire them as that He should call them; (2) those who virtually complain, "I do not hold that I have yet received my call. Why does not God, if He would yet save me, make some great interposition on my behalf?" Alas! for the guilty unbelief of the one, and the awful presumption of the other. Of all the refusals of God's love the real secret is the same. They may cover themselves up with various pretexts, but the cause is one. It is not in any outward circumstances; it is not in any particular temperament; it is not in the want of power; but our Saviour points to it at once with His omniscient mind. "How often would I have gathered ye, and ye would not!" It is the absence of the will; it is the want of that setting of the mind to God's mind; that conformity of the affections to God's promises; that appreciation of unseen things; that spiritual sense, which is the essence and the beginning of a new life. Therefore they cannot come.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 86.

CHRIST is set forth here under the symbol of a shelter. This is the central thought of the text, and we are now summoned with all humility and reverence to study it.

I. The first thing suggested by this symbol is the idea of danger. Not only or chiefly were the Jews warned of danger from the stroke of the Roman eagle, which was about to rend them as its prey. Great as was the political calamity that menaced them, their greatest danger was spiritual; the danger shared by all, in every age, who have broken the law, but have not accepted the Saviour. Infraction of law must be followed by infliction of penalty. Danger is implied in this very image, though at first sight it seems only to suggest ideas of beautiful tenderness and peace. No place for this figure would have been found in the symbols of Christ if there had been no danger.

II. The symbol of a shelter is so presented as to set forth the glory of Him who is thus revealed. It is *Divine* protection that is offered you. The overshadowing wing of omnipotence is spread in your defence. All the perfections of the sovereign Spirit combine to make the living shield which beats back the

destroying stroke, and which is broad enough to canopy a fugitive world.

III. This symbol of a shelter illustrates in the highest degree the condescending tenderness of Christ. It does so by its homely simplicity, as well as by its ineffable pathos.

IV. This symbol of Christ is so set forth as to suggest the idea of a shelter, afforded by one who interposes his own life between us and danger. A rock, out in the blinding glare of the wilderness, is a shelter to the traveller by being his substitute, and receiving the sunstroke on itself. A shield in the day of battle is a shelter to the warrior only when the shattering blow rings on the shield itself. Christ is a shelter to trusting souls only by interposing His own life between them and the shock of doom.

V. Note the ends to be attained by the sinner's flight to the Saviour. It is obvious that the immediate result is safety. But it would be a radical mistake to suppose that the Gospel urges men to seek safety only for safety's sake. Safety in Christ is the first step to practical godliness.

VI. This symbol of Christ is drawn in such a way as to show that man is responsible in the matter of his own salvation.

C. STANFORD, *Symbols of Christ*, p. 275.

I. MEN, while they are in a state of nature, are exposed to imminent danger. As transgressors of the law of God, they are liable to its penalty.

II. Our Lord Jesus Christ offers Himself as a shelter against this danger.

III. He fulfils this function with condescending tenderness.

IV. He delivers His people by the substitution of His own life for theirs.

V. The immediate result of application to Him is safety.

VI. Men are responsible in the matter of their own salvation.

G. BROOKS, *Five Hundred Outlines of Sermons*, p. 323.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 37.—D. Fraser, *The Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 209; J. B. French, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 364; J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, part i., p. 323; R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 421. xxiii. 37, 38.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 31; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. ii., p. 243.

Chap. xxiv., vers. 6-8.—"Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet," etc.

THE Storm and Strife of Life.

I. It was with the clearest prevision of the course of the development of Christendom that the Saviour uttered this dark prediction. He knew that strife would sunder, and famine would waste, and sword would slay with a tenfold force and fierceness; and in a measure through that very Gospel of peace which He sent His disciples forth in peril of their lives to proclaim. He knew that the new impulse, the new inspiration, which His Gospel offered would fire with a new intensity every passion of man's heart, would set the evil as well as the good under the strongest stimulus; would stir them up to fight out their battle with sterner purposes and larger resources; and thus, so profound was the problem of redemption, prolong through ages that discord which it was the deepest desire of His heart to destroy. The action of Christianity in healing sin-struck humanity is like the stimulating treatment in fever. Feed the system; kindle new strength. The disease will be fed as well as the vital power. The pain will be sharper, the battle will be sterner; but if there be *vis vitæ* in the system, under the stimulus it will conquer at last. And man will conquer through Christ, though the pain be sharper and the conflict longer than any but the Saviour dreams; for the *vis vitæ*, the vital power in humanity, through the Incarnation, is Christ—Christ in you, in the world, the hope of glory; which hope, unless man wilfully renounces it, God lives to fulfil.

II. Our great comfort under the burden and the strain of our pilgrimage is that the Lord is its Prophet, the Lord who came to share it that He might lift it, that it might not crush but train us, might not exhaust but educate our powers, and strengthen us to win the inheritance of glory. Sadly enough, we may be sure, the Lord prophesies this lot of tribulation to man and to mankind, for He was touched to tears even by human sorrows which a word could heal. But the fact that His lips utter the prophecy robs it of all its terror. The strife may live on and grow; the load may live on and grow, but the life grows with it, stronger, larger, with wider horizon, with firmer standing ground, with more far-reaching arms, with more glorious hopes.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 370.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 6.—F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*,

vol. xxii., p. 49. xxiv. 11.—J. H. Hitchens, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvii., p. 228. xxiv. 12, 13—C. Girdlestone, *Twenty Parochial Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 135; J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 328.

Chap. xxiv., ver. 13.—"But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

FINAL Perseverance not Inevitable.

When our Lord says that none can pluck from the Father's hand those who are His, He does not say that they who are His may not themselves break or fall away from Him. What else is the meaning of that terrible question: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" When St. Paul says that God's gifts are without repentance on God's part, he does not add that they cannot be rejected by man, since this had already been the case, with the very generation of Jews about whom he was writing to the Romans. The grace of God does not make our final perseverance inevitable. It makes it possible, probable, morally certain, if you will, but morally and not mechanically certain. God who has made us free respects the freedom which He has given us. He does not crush it even by His own merciful gifts; and grace no more absolutely assures Heaven than does natural will, or the force of habit conquer the road to it. And this leads me to ask what are the causes which make endurance to the end difficult in so very many Christian lives.

I. There is, first of all, what our Lord calls, "the persecution that ariseth because of the word." In some shape or other this is inevitable. Persecution is in any case friction; and as we all know, friction, if only it be continued long enough, brings movement to a standstill, until there be a new supply of the impelling force. Men who have done much for Christ have given way at last under the stress of relentless persecution.

II. And then there are, as our Lord says, the false Christs and the false prophets. Our faith is undermined by people who talk and write in the very best English, and who have so much about them that is winning and agreeable that we cannot believe what is really going on. We cannot go on breathing a bad air, and be as we were when we lived high up on the mountain, unless we take very great precautions. Not to take them under such circumstances as these is to be in a fair way to forfeit perseverance.

III. And then there is the weariness which steals over thought and heart with the lapse of time. Human faculties,

after all, are finite. They spend themselves and they fall back into lassitude and exhaustion. After great experiences, there is—I do not say a relapse, but a condition of less keenness of insight, less tension of will, less warmth of affection, less conscious effort of intelligence and of sanctified passion; and lookers on say that the excitement has passed, and that common sense has resumed its sway, and the soul, too, knows that something has passed from it inevitably, no doubt, from the nature of the case. And with this knowledge there comes depression; and this depression is in its way a trial, permitted, as we may believe, in order to make our service of God more unselfish than it would be if it were sustained throughout life by an uninterrupted sense of ecstasy. But it is a trial under which some men have failed. And then it may be the case that all is lost, and that perseverance is forfeited.

IV. And once more, there is the trifling with conscience, not necessarily in great matters, but in a number of little matters—omission of morning and evening prayers, or their curtailment; neglect of a regular review of conscience; carelessness as to the object upon which money is spent, and as to the proportion in which it is given to works of religion and mercy; recklessness in intercourse with others, especially if they are younger or less well informed. These and like matters help forward and dull the inoperative condition of conscience, which is in itself preparatory to a great failure. Perseverance is likely to be secured by three things especially: (1) By a sense of constant dependence on God; (2) by prayer for perseverance; (3) by keeping the mind fixed as much as possible on the end of life and on that which follows it.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,143.

Chap. xxiv., ver. 14.—"The Gospel of the Kingdom."

I. THE King is our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The seat of His kingdom is the soul.

III. The spirit of His kingdom is wise and beneficent and holy. Every kingdom has its peculiar character.

IV. The progress of His kingdom is unostentatious. It is irresistible, yet noiseless, like many of the mightier forces in Nature.

V. The boundaries of His kingdom are the boundaries of the dwellings of humankind.

G. BROOKS, *Five Hundred Outlines of Sermons*, p. 5.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 14.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 338, vol. v., p. 269; *New Manual of Sunday School Addresses*, p. 260.

xxiv. 15.—B. Warfield, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 40. xxiv. 24—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 324. xxiv. 26.—J. H. Thom, *Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ*, p. 131. xxiv. 26, 27.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 304; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 32. xxiv. 27.—D. Fraser, *The Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 221.

Chap, xxiv., ver. 28.—**"For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together."**

THE Law of Divine Judgment.

I. When a wild beast falls in the desert, or a beast of burden on the highway, there is no stir in the heavens for a time. But, far above human ken, the vulture is floating poised on his wings; and looking downwards his eye soon distinguishes the motionless thing—for he hunts by an eyesight unequalled in power among all living things, and like a stone he drops through miles of air. Others floating in the same upper region, see their brother's descent and know its meaning. One dark speck after another grows swiftly from the horizon, and in a few minutes fifty vultures are round the carrion. That illustrates—and with astonishing power and sharpness—for the disciples had often witnessed such a scene—the suddenness, the usefulness and the necessity of judgment. Inevitable, swift, unerring, as the vulture's descent on the carcase is the judgment-coming of the Son of Man to corrupt communities and corrupted men.

II. From all this we now infer the law of judgment. It is this: Wherever there is entire moral corruption then there is final punishment; wherever there is partial corruption, there is remedial punishment. God in His capacity as Governor of the world, as Educator of mankind, is bound to destroy corruption. It is necessary that the vultures should devour the carcase, lest it pollute the air and breed a pestilence. It is necessary that corrupted nations should be blotted out, lest they infect the world with evil which may delay the whole progress of mankind. And our own sense of justice goes with the destruction. Nor, when we are wise, do we think that such justice shows want of love. We know that the weak man who shrinks from exacting deserved punishment is often the most cruel when his own interests are touched; and we can trust ourselves in the hour of our trouble best to One whose justice we are so sure of, that we know that if our trouble was caused by wrong-doing He would make us feel that wrongness before He would relieve the trouble.

S. A. BROOKE, *The Spirit of the Christian Life*, p. 57.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 28.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 223;

vol. ix., p. 97; D. Fraser, *The Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 233. xxiv. 29.—R. Tuck, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 347. xxiv 29-34.—E. C. Gibson, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 292.

Chap. xxiv., ver. 35.—"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."

The Immutability of the Divine Word.

When the words of the text were uttered the eye of the Saviour was resting on scenes whose stability promised to be of world-long life. The hills round about Jerusalem looked like Nature's thrown-up fortress to guard from desolation or from the tooth of time, some favoured work of man. But that work cannot live always, says the holy Speaker, nor any other. The seeds of desolation and waste are in everything the eye looks upon. Riches, honours, comforts, friends, youth, beauty, genius, strength; the prospering enterprise, the unfolding hope, the fellowship of kindred minds, and the hallowed, domestic ties, how slight is our hold on these things. Our lesson is to "use the world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away." The words of Christ shall not pass away:

I. Because of the eternal power and Godhead of Him who spake them. The doctrine of our Saviour's Divinity is our life. It stamps all His teaching with the impress of infallible truth; it gives to all His promises the force of a present and felt reality. The matters to which Christ's words relate are too vital to our soul's happiness to be received on any authority which is not Divine.

II. Again, the words of Christ shall never pass away because they form the last of that series of communications vouchsafed by God to a lost world, never to be reopened, never to be added to, never by angel's or prophet's voice to be urged again. Christianity always claims for itself the distinction of being a final dispensation; those which went before it never did—not the Patriarchal, not the Levitical, not the Prophetical. Each was to usher in something better than itself, being a figure for the time present. All the revelations which went before pointed to Christianity, terminated and were absorbed in it.

III. The words of Christ shall not pass away because they are founded in eternal truth and in the fixed counsels of the immutable God. As God cannot change, so neither shall the word of truth change. It is everlasting, like Himself; it is a great unity, like Himself. Christ is emphatically the truth; His words contain in them an infinite and Divine essence.

Omnipotence spoke them; almightiness accompanied them; immortality dwelt in them;—they could neither turn, change, nor fail.

IV. There can be no passing away of Christ's words because of their connection with His own final glory as Mediator. The words of Christ have a mission, and He is glorified when that mission is fulfilled. He conquers when we conquer; He is honoured in the success of His work, in the triumphs of His truth, in the power of His grace over rebellious wills, in the diffused and extending reign of sanctity and love and righteousness and peace. "On His head were many crowns," said the beloved Apostle. They were His rejoicing, His recompense, the travail of His soul, the promised seed He should have to serve Him, the proof that His word had not returned unto Him void—had not passed away.

D. MOORE, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3,209.

THE Permanence of Christ's Words.

Let us try to observe some characteristics of our Lord's reported language which may enable us to understand the confident prediction of the text.

I. That which strikes us first of all in the words of our Lord Jesus is the authority which speaks in them, or rather which is their very soul. One evangelist says that our Lord's public teaching was so acceptable because "He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes." The scribes were anxious to bring their countrymen to look at the law in the light of the traditional interpretations of which they were the guardians and exponents; but if the scribes were to do this, it was not enough for them to say, "This is right, and that is wrong." They found themselves confronted with the difficulties which present themselves to any merely human teacher entrusted with the task of recommending a doctrine which he believes to be true to the attention, to the convictions, of the human mind. He knows how solid, how many-sided, is the resistance which awaits him; he feels his way gently; he explains tentatively. He lays siege, as it were, to a fortress which he is bent on capturing, and as if he were directing an intellectual battery against its outworks and defences; and where argument seems to fail him he appeals—perhaps to sentiment, to feeling, to passion. This is what the scribes did in their way. They were masters of a kind of reasoning, which, however little suited to Western or to modern tastes, was in its way subtle

and effective. It was the instrument with which they worked, and they only succeeded at all if they could get people to attend to it. With our Lord it was otherwise; He, generally speaking, takes no account whatever of those means of producing conviction which in merely human speakers command success. He does not reason—at least as a rule; He affirms a truth, knowing that it is the truth, and leaving it to make its own way in the soul of man. He feels that He has an ancient welcome prepared for Him within the soul of man; that He possesses the key to its wants and its mysteries; that within it, as no other teacher can be, He will be at home, and will be owned as its rightful Lord.

II. A second characteristic of our Lord's words is their elevation. His teaching rises above the ripest and largest wisdom of the whole ancient world—the best and truest sayings which the conscience, without the light of revelation, has left for the guidance of human life. As we listen to Him we are conscious always and everywhere of a matchless elevation. He is far above His countrymen, far above the wisest wisdom of the time, far above the wisest wisdom of the ages that have succeeded, or of which He has not been directly or indirectly the author. As we listen to Him we feel that He speaks and lives in an atmosphere to which we poor sinful men only ascend at rare intervals and by considerable efforts. As a Teacher, no less than as our Redeemer and Lord, He invites the praises of His Church—"Thou, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father."

III. A third characteristic of the words of Christ is their awful depth. Many of them were addressed to the people, and they were correspondingly simple in form. They were without any of the apparatus of learning, or of the pretence of culture. Each hearer felt at first as if he fully understood them, and saw all their bearings, and had sounded their meaning, and had only to lay up in his heart and mind what was at once so simple and so encouraging. But when they were laid up in memory, and taken down in writing, it was soon seen that there was a great deal more in them than had appeared to be the case at first. It was seen that beyond and beneath the first or superficial meaning there was a second, at once deeper and most adequate, and perhaps there was a third. Our Lord's words have depths in them which are explored sometimes by divinity, sometimes by the experience of a life, but which always elude complete investigation. They have about them that character

of infinitude which belongs to the more than human mind from which they proceed. Their depth is seen in their extraordinary and enduring ascendency over the best of men at the distance of these many centuries. He still has the power of pouring his own Divine enthusiasm, for the highest good of mankind, into the souls of others by means of these imperishable words.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, p. 1, 121.

THE Perpetuity of the Words of Christ.

I. Here we have a fair and bold comparison of two things: one which seems the slightest and most evanescent you can think of; another which seems the very ideal of all that is substantial and durable. Here are on the one side a few words, and on the other side the great solid world. What more fleeting, we should say, than a few articulated syllables, vibrating each on the ear for its second, and then dying away? what more everlasting than this gigantic world we live on? Yet the Saviour dares the comparison. He invites the comparison between the endurance of the words He utters and the endurance of the stars, the earth, and the ocean.

II. It is approaching towards two thousand years since the days of Christ's three years' ministry on earth. Ages are measured out since He spake with His human voice those words of wisdom and mercy, the like of which never man spake; and it is many a day, indeed, since His words, in their prosaic literalness, have passed away, have ceased to stir the audible pulses of the air, have passed to silence. Yet, though no magic was impressed on the syllables which flowed from the lips of the Redeemer to arrest their natural passing away, still it is true and certain that they have not passed away, and cannot pass away while the world stands. For one thing, they have not passed away, in this sense—that when they were spoken the simple narrative of the evangelists took and perpetuated them; and in these four Gospels we have the words of Christ preserved.

III. But it is a little thing to say that Christ's words were perpetuated on paper. We should not set much store by the fact that upon printed pages by millions and millions the words of our Redeemer have outlived the storms and the wear of ages; we should not mind much about that if it stood by itself; but take it with this, that these words are so marvellously adapted to the needs of our immortal nature that those who have once felt their power, would feel it was parting with life

to part with them. Earthquakes, deluges, might sweep this world, but you must unpeople it before the words of Christ could pass away from it.

IV. Though the last Bible perished, as perish it may in the wreck and ruin of this world; though the blessed words of Jesus were to do what they never can—fade away utterly from the remembrance of the glorified soul; even then these words would live on in the effects they had produced. They would live and last in heaven, in the souls they had brought there; in their justification before God, in the purity of their renewed natures, in their changeless and never-ending peace.

A. K. H. B., *Graver Thoughts of a Country Parson*, 3rd series, p. 310.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 35.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 115; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xvi., p. 174; H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 97; A. Mursell, *Ibid.*, vol. xx., p. 181.

Chap. xxiv., ver. 39.—"They knew not till the flood came, and took them all away."

THE Moral of Accidents.

I. They who search those common Scriptures, the newspapers, will find many things that will trouble their hearts too much, if these hearts be susceptible and sympathising, unless they also search the Holy Scriptures. If we find God in the Holy Scriptures, then we may find a reason for much that happens in the world, or a reason for believing that there are good ends to be answered by accidents, even the most woful and destructive, although we may not be able to discover what these are. We do not get rid of accidents by protesting that they ought not to happen, and that, in our opinion, they never would happen if there were a God and He cared for the world. But if there be a God, and if He does care for the world, then faith in Him will help us when neither prudence nor science can. And this faith will at the same time make our prudence and science more serviceable to us, for it will instruct us to reason thus, we ought to think that, as accidents happen by God's permission, they have a meaning and a lesson for good; let us then seek this out; let us increase our knowledge of Nature's law, let us exercise fuller care in our obedience to it. When we are considering sad things that happen we should think: (1) How many accidents are but slight as to the hurt they do in comparison with the service of the lesson they teach; (2) from how many things "going to happen" we are saved when

loss and danger appear imminent; (3) how manifest and honourable are the works and courage of man in averting accidents, and in lessening the harm they do; (4) how incessant is the beneficial operation of the great natural laws, and how varied in kind is their benefit; (5) how careless and untrue is the work of many men, how needful is it that they should have a warning they would heed; (6) how certain is it that unfaithfulness in work will bring disasters, small and great, which are misnamed when we call them accidents, for though we knew not, we might have known, that they were sure to happen.

II. Many men have lost their lives by accident; no man ever lost his soul by accident. And yet the accident that cuts short a man's life may bring his soul into a sad, disgraced condition, whence he has had ample opportunity to have saved it.

T. T. LYNCH, *Sermons for My Curates*, p. 3.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 39.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 823; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 308. xxiv. 40-42.—T. J. Rowsell, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3,665; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. iii., p. 49. xxiv. 41.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 114.

Chap. xxiv., ver. 42.—"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

WHO are they that watch? What are the marks, it may be asked, that we are awake, and, according to our duty, looking out always for the coming of Christ, and of death as his messenger?

I. To this question there is one plain answer; no man can be said to be watching, no man has any reasonable ground for thinking he is ready unless he is careful how he lives. We must, it is certain, be constantly taking pains with ourselves, or else we are not even trying to be ready. And unless we look often unto the state of our lives and hearts, to see whether we be ready, and to correct whatever is amiss, we are by no means likely to be well prepared. For we cannot see God, we cannot be prepared for death, without following after holiness; and no man can be said to follow after holiness who does not try to get the better of his bad habits and wrong dispositions, and we cannot get the better of these without trouble and pains and self-denial—and these must be long-continued. In short, we cannot be ready to meet death with a good hope in Christ, unless we are His disciples in deed as well as in name; and He Him-

self has said that no man can be His disciple who does not bear His cross and come after Him.

II. Again, it is plain that no one can keep himself prepared who is not used to think often and earnestly about those great changes that are coming upon us: such as death itself, and the state after death, the God who shall judge us, and the hope we have of standing in that judgment. A person must give his mind frequently to these things, or he cannot keep his heart disentangled from this world and fixed on a better; and I need hardly say that it is above all things necessary that we should keep ourselves indifferent to fleshly pleasures and worldly pursuits, or else we shall be sure to forget the coming on of death. It is in this way that most people do become so thoughtless about the shortness and uncertainty of life. Their hearts are engaged in pleasure or business belonging to this life, and they hope they may continue long in this world, till at last they persuade themselves they shall. They will not hear the voice of that heavenly love which is graciously warning us: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always."

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. vii., p. 277.

CHRISTIAN Watching.

What is Christian Watching. Partially I can answer that questions by two remarks:

I. First of all, in Christian watching there is implied a vigorous exercise of a Christian conscience. (1) When we wish to quicken and increase the power of conscience, we must do so by teaching it to be more and more keen in perception, Conscience must stand before us, as a watcher on a ship stands, guiding the bark of the soul through the wild waves and the thick darkness of this deep night of life, and crying out to us, from moment to moment in the voice of the great Lord whose echo it is: "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." (2) But conscience requires more than to be keenly perceptive; it requires also to be wide in its range of vision—it must omit nothing. It must not fret over trifles, but it must not leave them out; it must recollect, it must learn increasingly to recollect that attention to the little things of every day is an element in that attitude of a Christian which the Lord calls *watching*. (3) You must exercise conscience to assist you in wise decision. (4) Conscience must also finally and above all things be peremptory in command, conscience *may* be wrong, it *may* make mistakes, but it must never be disobeyed. To disobey

conscience is to commit the last disloyalty—it is to learn to be untrue to yourselves. (5) Conscience needs illumination. It needs the illumination that comes from prayer, from the Scripture, from the wise advice of patient and experienced friends. It needs more; it needs reinforcement; it needs the presence of the Lord of conscience; it needs to feed upon the power of Christ.

II. There is another point in Christian watching which I must note. It is not only by the exercise of conscience; it is by a patient practice of thoughtfulness. To take thought and make it pass into a permanent form; to lay hold upon will and make it act in one definite direction,—to do that is to set the life sweeping onward, like a resistless current, in one direction; it is to place the whole soul in one steady attitude; and this definite directing of the current of life, and this steady fixing of the attitude of soul—this and nothing else is what our blessed Redeemer calls watching. "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

W. J. KNOX-LITTLE, *Characteristics of the Christian Life*, p. 47.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 42.—T. Wallace, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 131; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 165.

Chap. xxiv., vers. 43. 44.—"But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

THE Uncertainty of Life the Great Reason for Holiness.

I. With all our consciousness that there is great mercy in the concealment of the future, we cannot question that there would be far more preparation for death under an arrangement which gave notice when life would terminate, than under another which leaves it wholly uncertain. Why, then, is this information withheld? Though we may not be able to show why God draws a veil before coming days, we may certainly determine enough to induce us to be thankful rather than oppressed. For you must readily perceive that the character of the existing dispensation would be altogether changed, were we enabled to foresee whatever could happen. It would no longer be a dispensation of faith, but a dispensation of sight. It is evident enough that walking by faith is no better to us than would be walking by sight. We find it intensely difficult in our ignorance to submit ourselves to God, in whose hands we

are. What would it be if we had acquaintance with the future, and so were in a measure independent; and could make our plans with certainty as to their issue. The wife would be a widow while her husband lived, the child would be an orphan while yet blessed with parents if the funeral were foreknown and the day of separation clearly revealed.

II. It is practically of very little importance whether we can give satisfactory reasons why the future should be hidden, and for the declaration that the unveiling it would produce far greater preparedness for the termination of life. It might on the whole, be advantageous, or it might on the whole be disastrous, that the day of death should be known; but the arrangement to which we are to conform is one in which the day is absolutely unknown; and it must be our business rather to labour at acting agreeably to the circumstances in which we are placed, than to determine what effect would be wrought were those circumstances changed. The goodman of the house is not informed in what watch the thief will approach. No matter, then, whether or not the being informed would make nim more vigilant in securing a successful resistance. He cannot gain the information, and the only question therefore is—What can be done now that, search how we will, to-morrow eludes our inquiry? The answer to this is contained in the last verse of our text, in the exhortation which Christ founds on the statement in regard to the dispensation: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,501.

THE Second Coming of Christ is spoken of in divers passages as an event that will take the world unawares—come when men are not expecting it—when they are immersed in the cares and pleasures and business of life, in such an hour as they think not. But why need we speculate as to the precise hour of that Advent? Death is to each of us the Lord's coming. Death closes our day of probation. Death puts a stop to preparation. Death seals our eternal destiny. As the tree falls, so it lies; as we die, so shall we rise in the judgment, fit or not fit, ready or not ready, to meet the Lord. And what is it to be ready? In what consists the preparation for Christ's coming, for death, for judgment—which all will allow ought now to be made.

I. We must be rooted and grounded in religious faith. We must have a strong grasp upon the righteousness of Christ; we

must be joined to him by a lively faith; we must have wrought in us a settled conviction of His power to usward.

II. "To every man his work." We have, then, each one of us here a work to do in this world—a work which Christ has set us. Our work, God's ordained work for us, is that which lies at our feet—the daily task we have to do. We need not look out for other fields, we need not cast about for what are called (often miscalled) larger spheres of usefulness. Let a man labour diligently in his calling; let him put his heart into his daily task, be it the commonest or apparently the least interesting task; let him work at it with a will, as doing it under God's eye, not as mere pleasure, but as the servant of Jesus Christ, and he may rest assured his labours will not be in vain in the Lord.

III. Again, to be ready for Christ, to be in any sort prepared for His coming, we must have fought and conquered our besetting sin—the evil to which we are most inclined; the bad habit we have contracted; the lust in which we may have indulged. That soul is altogether unfit to meet its God that is living in any known wilful sin.

IV. Once again, I must not omit that which is the very essence of Christian preparation, the having in us the mind that was in Him; some portion of His blessed spirit, the spirit of brotherly kindness, and of charity. "All our doings without charity are nothing worth. Charity is the bond of peace, and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before God."

R. D. B. RAWNSLEY, *Village Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 1.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 44.—C. Girdlestone *Twenty Parochial Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 291; W. Hay Aitken, *Mission Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 247. xxiv. 45-51.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. vii., p. 165.

Chap. xxv., ver. 1.—"The kingdom of Heaven."

THE kingdom of Heaven has a strange fulness of meaning in the Scriptures, and must be understood to signify something quite different from the company of those who may call themselves saints, or may truly be saints, in any particular age. These last are "the children of the kingdom," but do not define its limits. It is a state; as real and complex as earthly commonwealths; it is the government of a King over masses of various character and worth.

I. The Creator is already the rightful King of all the human

beings in the world. This may seem to many a superfluous truism; but there is a theology which leads to the impression that the revolted world had been abandoned by its sovereign, and was made over by him to the prince of evil, to govern and torment at his will. God has never renounced His rights, has never ceased to treat the devil as an usurper; prophets have never ceased to prophesy that the tyrant would be driven from his usurped dominion, and that the reign of the true King would be restored. God sent His Son to declare His forgotten Name, and to recover His lost sway over human hearts.

II. Christ was the newest King. He claimed an empire over a world which He had saved by suffering, and redeemed by a bloody death. Christ was the oldest King. The races over which He sought to establish a spiritual empire had been His from the first hour of their birth. The kingdom which He establishes by the proclamation of His Name as King and His right of rule is but the resurrection in a diviner, a transfigured, form of the most ancient reign of God over all His worlds. The essential character of the Kingdom of Christ is spiritual; it subsists in the personal conscious relation of the individual soul to Him, its Redeemer and its Lord. But it cannot forget the older, universal reign of God over creation which sin had spoiled; it yearns to re-establish it, and claims, in right of that elder kingdom, vast multitudes as its subjects who have not yet accepted its conditions and vowed fealty to its King. A consideration of the parables of the seed-field, the net, the virgins, the servants, will show that within the broad circle of the kingdom of Heaven are to be found men of all classes and characters—lovers of Christ and haters of Christ, faithful servants and false, wise bridemaidens and foolish—to an extent which it appears to me can only be explained upon the supposition that wherever the Gospel of the kingdom is proclaimed Christ considers that His kingdom is set up, and that men enter into new and more solemn relations of responsibility, through knowing the name, character, and claims of the one true King.

J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 65.

The Work of the Kingdom of Heaven.

I. Every member of the community in this Christian land sustains most solemn and pregnant relations to Christ, belongs to Him by the most sacred of obligations, and wrongs Him of His own by refusing to heed His voice and obey His word. That poor ragged beggar who runs before you to sweep the

specks of mud out of the crossing, or hangs outside the door while you take your noonday meal, is mixed up with you inextricably in the great system of the Gospel dispensation; he has new relations, responsibilities, and destinies, because that Gospel which makes you a man, a partaker of the Divine nature, has come here. Regard him tenderly, regard him reverently; for such an one Christ died, and to such an one Christ is opening His arms and crying: "Come hither, and I will give thee rest." The outcasts in a Christian country are Christ's poor.

II. With such, the kingdom of Heaven has specially concerned itself in all countries and in all ages of the Gospel dispensation. Up to the dispensation of the kingdom of Heaven there had been a constant drawing off of the wise and earnest from the poor, ignorant, and depraved, who were left pitilessly by the pagan system to their hopeless lot. Under the "kingdom" there has been a constant drawing up of the poor, ignorant, and depraved into the higher brotherhoods of humanity; and class after class, stratum after stratum of the lower levels of manhood have been built in with the finest, to the strengthening of the unity and the embellishment of the beauty of the temple of the Church.

III. The great instrument of Christ in raising them, the organ of administration and government in His Kingdom, is the loving voice and the helping hand of the Church. I regard the spiritual men and women in England as His government and administration in His kingdom; by whose wise efforts His subjects are to be instructed, elevated, purified, and brought to submit personally, with free, willing hearts, to His loving rule. Wherever He proclaims His Kingdom He makes provision for its complete subjection to Himself. Christ has agencies at His command, and under His control, for the work of the Kingdom, for making a complete conquest wherever He has proclaimed His name; and these agencies have one feature in common—they are all living souls, and use only a man's instruments: eye, voice, and hand.

J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 88.

Reference: xxv. 1.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 138.

Chap. xxv., vers. 1-5.

I. The main difficulty of interpretation in this parable is to understand what is meant by the wise and foolish virgins

respectively; and also what is meant by the "taking oil in their vessels with their lamps." In the meaning of those expressions lies the key to the passage. It seems of very inferior importance to determine why the precise number—ten—should be specified; and why there should be an exactly equal division into five wise and five foolish. Ten persons in Jewish usage were regarded as forming a company. It was our Lord's intention, as I take it, simply to indicate that there was a division; that amongst the persons represented by the term "virgins," there was such an essential difference of character, as led to an ultimate difference of destiny. Some interpreters have imagined that we are to understand the ten virgins to be, all of them, genuine and sincere followers of the Lord Jesus Christ; but that a certain proportion—through ignorance or carelessness or want of watchfulness or blamable misreading of the statements of Holy Writ—have suffered themselves to lapse into a state of unreadiness for the coming of Christ; that this their unreadiness is punished by a temporary exclusion from the best and choicest blessings into which the Lord will introduce His waiting people; but that inasmuch as they have really the root of the matter in them, are really subjects of the converting grace of God,—they will, though excluded from the primary privilege, enter at last into the happiness of the eternal kingdom. This view, however, it appears to me, is not contained in the passage before us; our Saviour says to the foolish virgins: "*I know you not.*"

II. The company of ten virgins represents the body of professing Christians, just such as are found assembled together on the Lord's Day in the Lord's house. By the fact of uniting for public worship, they all carry the lamp of outward profession. But there was a difference in the company. Five were wise and five were foolish. All carried the lamp, the symbol of outward profession; but only a certain number carried oil in their vessels, the symbol of the inward spiritual life. The wise virgins are those who, being united by a living faith to the living Saviour, have access to a fountain of grace, which shall never fail. The foolish are those who have no such close and intimate relation to the Saviour. They may be able to give definitions, and to discourse upon doctrines; but their faith is dead, being without works. They have merely the lamp of outward profession, without the oil of the inward spiritual life.

G. CALTHROP, *Pulpit Recollections*, p. 222.

REFERENCE: XXV. 1-10.—Parker, *Cavendish Pulpit*, p. 85.

Chap. xxv., vers. 1-13.

HERE is one of the larger and grander pictures in this gallery of various glory. It is sublime in its ample outline, and exquisitely tender in its details. It is charged with many precious lessons, which flow freely at the gentlest touch; and it is cruel to put it to the torture, to compel it to give meaning which it never received from its Author.

I. I think no symbolic significance should be attributed to the virgins, as such, in the interpretation of the parable: It is when they take their lamps and go forth to meet the Bridegroom that they first acquire a spiritual significance. The whole group represent that portion of any community who hear the Gospel, accept its terms, and profess to be the disciples of Christ.

II. "To meet the Bridegroom," the parable and the discourse which precedes it bear upon Christ's Second Coming and the attitude which becomes His disciples in prospect of that decisive event. They who have been washed in His blood love His appearing. When the cry was heard all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. When life is closing behind, and eternity opening before us, we are all aroused. Every one who has a lamp hastens then to examine its condition and stimulate its flame; all who have borne Christ's Name search themselves to see whether they are ready for His presence. There is no visible distinction at this stage between those who have only a name that they love, and those who have attained also the new nature; all bestir themselves to examine the ground of their hope, and the state of their preparation.

III. At this point the decisive difference which existed in secret long before, emerges into view. The foolish virgins, having no oil in separate vessels, could not keep the flame of their lamps any longer alive. Both classes had a profession; the formalists had a profession and nothing more. How fondly the empty, in such a crisis, lean on the full! Alas! even the full is but a little vessel filled by Christ. That vessel is not a spring; the saved sinner is not a saviour of sinners. If you neglect the Son of God while He stands at the door and knocks, in vain will you apply to a godly neighbour, after the day of grace is done.

IV. The foolish virgins went away after midnight to seek a supply of oil; but we are not informed whether or not they obtained it. The omission is significant; this word of Jesus

gives no encouragement to delay in the matter of the soul's salvation; not a ray of hope is permitted to burst through the gloom that shrouds these hapless wanderers. The sole lesson of the parable is a simple sublime warning that sinners should close with Christ now, lest they should be left to invoke His Name in vain at the hour of their departure..

W. ARNOT, *The Parables of Our Lord*, p. 282.

I. THE Bridegroom. He represents our Lord Jesus Christ, the Divine Head and loving Husband of that Church which is His Bride—the union which faith forms between Him and His people being represented as a marriage. It is one of love; for though a wealthy marriage to the Bride, it is, on her part as well as on His, one of endearment. "We love Him because He first loved us." It is one which grim death shall never dissolve and leave Christ's Church a mourning widow.

II. The Virgins. They stand here as the representatives of the visible Church—of every Church and congregation of professing Christians—a picture, then, which should fill many of us with alarm, and set all to the task of examining the foundation of their hopes, in the view of death and judgment.

III. The Sleep of the Virgins. The scene is one of repose—no sounds but measured breathing; and by the lamps dimly burning ten forms are seen stretched out in various attitudes, but all locked in the arms of sleep. How unlike sentinels; watchers; persons watching a Bridegroom's arrival, and ready at any moment for the call to go forth to meet Him! They sleep like infants who have nothing to do or care for; or like sons of toil at the close of day, when their day's work is done. (1) The sleep of the wise virgins may indicate that peace which they are invited and entitled to enjoy, who have sound scriptural, indubitable evidence in their hearts and lives, that justified by faith they are at peace with God—and so, as St. Paul says, may "be careful for nothing." If that is what is meant by their sleeping, let those whom they represent sleep on and take their rest. (2) By the sleeping, as well of the wise as of the foolish, our Lord perhaps teaches what the best will be readiest to admit—that even God's people are not so watchful as they ought to be and would be, were they constantly to live under the feeling that they know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh.

IV. The Suddenness of the Bridegroom's Coming. Night is the most common period for dying. It is most frequently at

what is called the turn of the night that, in those rooms whose lighted windows contrast with darkened streets, and within whose walls spectators watch through their tears the last throes of expiring nature, the cry arises: "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!" In various ways it belongs, if I may say so, to the chapter of accidents, whether our death may not be as sudden and unexpected as the coming of the Bridegroom here, or as the Second Advent, in which our Lord shall appear with the surprise of a thief in the night. What may happen any day, it is certainly wise to be prepared for every day.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Parables in the Light of the Present Day*, p. 33.

THE parable of the Ten Virgins is one spoken by our Lord towards the close of His public ministry, when, with the Cross only a little in advance, He gave utterance to the most solemn warnings concerning His coming again in glory and might.

I. (ver. 1)—The general significance of the opening description is so plain as hardly to admit of diversity of opinion. The characteristics of those belonging to Christ's Church are expectations of Christ's coming in glory, dedication to the duty of giving Him a joyous welcome, and preparation for such a welcome. The Church on the earth is a testimony concerning a great future, a witness to the promise of Christ's reappearance, with throngs of attendants, as a bridegroom in the midst of his marriage rejoicings. This expectation is professed by all who declare themselves disciples of the Lord Jesus. That the lighted lamp does not mean spiritual life in the soul seems clearly proved by many considerations. The use of these lighted lamps is restricted to a special season, and has its significance determined by this fact. The lamps are naturally accompaniments on account of the need for going out in the darkness of night. They were to add to the expected effect of the welcome only on account of the darkness. Again, the lamp is a merely external accession to be used for a time and then laid aside. The lamp or light is outward profession of personal expectation of the coming of the Lord.

II. (vers. 2-4)—As the virgins came forth they appeared a united band, sharing in the same expectations, interested in the same great event. But there were marked differences in their preparations. There was folly as well as wisdom apparent—a true preparedness on the part of some, but partial preparation in the case of others, really preparing for disappointment.

III. (ver. 5)—Our Saviour places before our view a threefold representation of human history as connected with His mission of mercy and love: (1) The period of busy preparation in prospect of His coming; (2) the sleep of death, traces of previous profession and activity lying around the resting-place; (3) the coming of our Lord in glory.

IV. (ver. 9)—It is thus that the Lord sketches the crisis, which He anticipates with certainty, and of which He has always spoken with utmost solemnity. The preparation of the lifetime is the measure of preparedness at the resurrection. At whatever time the Lord may come, mere profession cannot endure. This will first be recognized by the men themselves who have made the profession, and on that ground alone have cherished the hope of sharing in the rejoicing. It will be recognized by themselves even before it is condemned by the Lord; arising from the dead they shall find their profession itself ready to expire.

V. (vers. 11, 12)—Interpretation here requires that due weight be given to what is unsaid as well as to what is spoken. On the foolish virgins' part there is the absence of confession while there is the utterance of entreaty. On the Bridegroom's part there is no expression of His own will or determination, but a declaration of fact as to the relation of the suppliants to Himself. These features in the parable are full of meaning. Receiving such instruction as we have here, we are standing beyond the region where profession of friendship is of value, whether sincere or insincere. We are on the threshold of the scene of rejoicing, where friendship is tested by precious intercourse, where the gladness is that of reunion, and the festal company are united to their Lord by a thousand ties of cherished association. To have been known unto the Lord, and have had the relationship of friends in former times, is security for admission here; to have been a stranger to Him, with no prior fellowship, is to make admission impossible.

H. CALDERWOOD, *The Parables of Our Lord*, p. 383.

THE Ten Virgins.

I. God's children are wise; the rest are foolish. (1) They see things as they truly are. (2) They do not rest in knowledge. (3) They live for eternity. (4) They are like God.

II. The wise and foolish are alike in many things. (1) They enjoy the same ordinances. (2) They use the same speech.

(3) They utter the same prayers. (4) They have the same outward behaviour

III. There is a difference. Professors are often striven with by the Spirit still. (1) They are not taught by the Spirit. (2) They are not dwelt in by the Spirit.

R. M. McCheyne, *Additional Remains*, p. 455.

References: xxv. 1-13.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 225; A. Mursell, *Calls to the Cross*, p. 224; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 179; A. B. Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 496; M. Dods, *The Parables*, p. 235; W. M. Taylor, *Parables of Our Saviour*, p. 104. xxv. 1-30.—*Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 179. xxv. 3.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 286. xxv. 4.—R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 219.

Chap. xxv., ver. 5.—"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept."

Maiden Spirits waiting for Happy Life.

I. Men are always discussing questions of time—how long the world has lasted, or will last; the day of judgment, questions of futurity in one shape or another; in fact, putting off getting their thoughts away from the present, which contains for them all that is to come. There are three remarkable parables which turn on this unwillingness of man to live in the present, because the future seems far off. They are all spoken by our Blessed Lord in His solemn prophecy concerning the last day, when He is warning us that there are many last days, many waves and tides of judgment fulfilled, all belonging to the same great ocean of judgment. The first parable deals with men in power who think their Lord is out of the way, and misuse their power. The second, of the ten virgins, deals with the enthusiasm and love which sleeps, because the end is not soon. The third deals with the lack of purpose and unwilling heart, the slackness, which will not work when the Master's eye is away. The kernel of all is, that there seems to be delay, that this causes false security, and that an unexpected presence brings to an end the delusion.

II. In the parable of the Ten Virgins we see a happy company of the young, waiting for a happy festival of life, full of love and joy. The Bridegroom is coming, and they are the friends of the Bride. The picture, drawn of life, is bright and triumphant, full of excitement and hope and eager longing; and all this happiness is to come soon. The lamps imply that all the external agencies necessary were given them; all the outward means of grace, teaching and teachers, religious training,

sacraments, Scriptures—every outward and visible means by which inward and spiritual grace is conferred; whilst the oil is the inner truth of life, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the real qualities which are kept alive by outward good.

III. So this happy company wait for a happier end. Whether we are stewards in authority, or maiden spirits waiting for a happy triumph of good, or traders set to work with toil and risk, it is all the same: the great Lord tarries long in our opinion, because we know not that an everlasting presence of judgment and life is on us, whether we see it or whether we do not.

E. THRING, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 1.

NOBLE Dreams are True.

I. Our Lord puts before us the unflinching truth when He tells us that all slumbered and slept. The mere enthusiasm and youthful fire does always in all cases die out. When the weary delays and monotonous evils of life come, all that freshness of spirit and untried grandeur of thought, goes. Day after day disappointment and petty trials dim the brightness of early hope; and if there is nothing gained before this takes place, nothing is left. *All sleep*—good and evil alike. And how striking a picture this is of what we see and feel daily; time drags heavily; nothing great happens; the Bridegroom tarries; every crisis is a sort of coming of the Bridegroom; but there is no crisis. The very coldness of night tends to sleep; the want of light tends to sleep; the tiresomeness tends to sleep; and personal comfort and a certain unwillingness to move naturally comes after the bright activity, and watchful eagerness, and restless longings, of the young earnest life as yet untried.

II. Then comes the great warning of the parable, the dividing line. The dull, tiresome hours pass on, and all seem equally off their guard; when, all of a sudden, an unexpected crisis bursts on these sleepers, and the sleepy hours. The sleepers are called on to act; and all start up and look about to prepare for action! Then is seen the difference between those whose lamps were only lighted for immediate use and show and a little display in the sight of men, and those who have a reserve store of energy and secret power, which they have got together, quietly and patiently, and hidden away out of sight. The deadness of monotonous days does not destroy the collecting power, the storing-up power, the inward gathering of strength, even though it does destroy the freshness of spirit. This is a great truth, this fact of dreary waiting trying the

heart, but not in any way destroying the working power, even though all sleep. It is not the high hope of youth, the bridal promise, the happy dream of noble life, that is untrue and false in grain; it is the letting go the hope, the promise, the dream, that stamps the dreamer as fool. He who hopes for the Bridegroom is wise; he who gives up his hope is the fool. The dreamer is true.

E. THRING, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 6.

I. The Tarrying of the Bridegroom. Its reasons: (1) He is not willing that any should perish; (2) to fill up the number of His elect; (3) to try the graces of His people.

II. The Sleep of the Virgins. "They all slumbered and slept." (1) How Christians sleep. The eyes begin to shut; the ear does not hear Christ knocking; the sleeper dreams of idols and vain fancies. (2) How hypocrites sleep. They lose all their convictions; they lose their joy in Divine things; they give over prayer.

III. The Coming of the Bridegroom. The time was midnight. We know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh.

R. M. MCCHEYNE, *Additional Remains*, p. 460.

REFERENCES: xxv. 5.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ix., p. 67; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in a Religious House*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 608; *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 114.

Chap. xxv., ver. 6.—"At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him."

THE Duty of Watchfulness.

I. The ten virgins represent the people of the Lord, awakened by the Spirit, separate from the world, looking for His coming. But among these there is a wide distinction. Some were wise, prudent, circumspect; others were foolish, improvident, unthrifty. And in what was this shown? The improvident, although they took their lamps, did not take with them oil, whereby those lamps might be fed. The prudent took oil in their vessels with their lamps. And wise, indeed, is that Christian who goes and does likewise; to whom all means and opportunities of grace are precious; who does not say, within himself, "Once the Lord's, always the Lord's," but prays and strives and presses onwards that he may be found in Him at His coming.

II. "While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." This is said, not with blame expressed or implied, but

merely as a matter of fact. Their waiting was a state of slumber—dreams were their realities—their real state and interests forgotten. And what is the life of God's people in this world—what is their waiting for the coming of their Lord—but a slumbering and a sleeping? We have, indeed, through all these long ages during which the Bridegroom has tarried, been slumbering and sleeping; weak in faith, wavering in hope, cold in love; timid and slothful for Christ, and earnest only for self and the world.

III. The cry was made, and "all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps." Ready to meet Him none were; the lamps of all wanted trimming. Life cannot ever be kept up to the tension of its most solemn requirements; but happy they, who have that within, or have access to that above, which will, when the hour comes, repair the wasted oil. And so was it with the wise virgins. Their store of oil fed their lamps, and they were speedily bright for their work. Not so, however, with those others, once equally earnest with them. "The foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out."

IV. "The Bridegroom cometh:" Once for all this cry shall be made to the whole Church. But once also it is made to each of Christ's people. To them especially does this parable speak. The Bridegroom is tarrying; years are passing; you are dreaming your dreams, slumbering and sleeping, as compared to what men in earnest should be doing. But this is true of us all; my question is another: "Have you oil in your vessels with your lamps?"

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 93.

REFERENCE: xxv. 6.—F. O. Morris, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 214.

Chap. xxv., vers. 6-9.

MARK here:—

I. The Discovery. "Our lamps are gone out." (1) There is no indwelling grace. Their lamps went out because they had no oil. They burned for a while, as a dry wick will do, often with a great blaze, but soon the flame decays, and it goes out for want of oil. This is the case with hypocrites. They have no spring of gracious oil within their hearts. (2) They have to appear before Christ. It is an easy thing to appear a Christian before men. "Man looks only on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart."

II. The Anxious Application. "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out." (1) Hypocrites will then see the difference between them and the godly. (2) They will see what a happy thing it is to have oil in their lamps. (3) They will apply to the godly.

III. The Disappointment: "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you." (1) It is not in their power to give grace. (2) They have none to spare. The righteous scarcely are saved.

R. M. McCheyne, *Additional Remains*, p. 465.

I. "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh." What does this mean? It means, I think, that the indications of the approach of the Second Advent have become so striking and so numerous, that they cannot possibly be misinterpreted or mistaken. The Christian may not, indeed, be able to tell you precisely what these signs may be, but he will be ready to recognize them when they appear. He has a spiritual instinct, which will enable him to detect the forerunners of his Lord in the events which are taking place upon the earth.

II. But, in addition to the cry, there is a summons, "Go ye out to meet Him." What does this mean? It means, go forth to receive the recompense of your doings. Behold! He cometh, and His reward is with him, to give to every man according as his work shall be. The time of sowing is over; the time of reaping has come. As the great final coming of Christ was typified and prefigured by His coming in judgment against the devoted city of Jerusalem, so there occurs in our own individual experiences events which foreshadow the Advent, and warn us to keep our loins girt about, and our lamps burning. There are, in our histories, smaller, subordinate, preparatory advents of our Lord. The Lord comes to us in many a crisis of our lives, in times of great deliverances, in times of heavy calamity, in times of overwhelming sorrow, in times of mental and spiritual conflict, when we are tossed with doubt, and seem not to find a ray of light to lead us out of the thick darkness in which we are well-nigh overwhelmed. Such periods are doubtless intended to be periods of close, rigorous, scrutinising self-examination. It is meant that we should arise and trim our lamps. And we can easily understand that, when the end draws nigh; when the signs of the Second Advent, hitherto disregarded, hang in the heavens with the menacing glare of an unmistakable portent;

when the actors crowd in upon the scene, and the procession of events, whose character none can misunderstand, begins to come rapidly into view, and the tramp of the advancing multitude is distinctly heard,—we can easily understand that then even the true child of God, who has watched and waited for the coming of his Lord, will cast a glance over his spiritual condition, and begin to trim his lamp. The day of the Lord—the sifting, searching, scrutinizing day of the Lord—is a terrible thing; and serious, solemn thought will become him who is about to enter, though ever so well prepared, into the presence of the all-wise and all-holy God.

G. CALTHROP, *Pulpit Recollections*, p. 234.

Chap. xxv., ver. 7.—"Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps."

I. OUR parable teaches that, however long and deeply a man may sleep, he is sure to awake at last. "Then." Is it not true that to every soul comes the time when God calls—calls plainly, audibly, loudly, "Then"? (1) There are epochs in an age when all things seem to call to arise and trim the lamps; and when the Bridegroom seems so near. There are times when events in an age seem to muster so rapidly; when iniquity abounds and love waxes cold; and when voices and events seem in the air, saying, "Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain and may be ready to die." (2) Healthiest lives need warning. They all arose—I notice then that holiest souls have fears, need vigilance, and must use means.

II. Instrumentality. We are taught that however excellent an instrument a lamp may be, it is only an instrument. No lamp is its own end, and the profession of Christianity is not its own end, and none of the means employed by God are their own end. Lamps are to give light, and for progress, and duty, and comfort. "Their lamps." There is (1) Faith. Faith is a lamp, and yet faith may not save. It may be wanting in the love which purifies the heart, and it may be the gift of logic, and not the gift of God—an intellectual apprehension, and nothing more. Arise and trim this lamp. (2) Knowledge. Knowledge is only instrumental. A creed about Christianity will not do. A philosophy of Christianity will not do. Deeper, deeper—"I know whom I have believed." (3) There is experience. This lamp needs the oil. What is experience without

it? It has no evidence, cold, dead, a memory without a light or flower. Therefore do you trim this lamp.

III. Every privilege brings duties; to every necessary act there is a responsibility. "They all arose and trimmed their lamps; they had all slept. From few things are we more in danger than from sleep. There is a state of the soul, spiritually so called. It is when we fall into the arms of indifference and carelessness; it is when the too fatal rest calls us, when spirits tempt us with their unhallowed opiates. Therefore, let us trim our lamps—let us go from analysis to duty. Consideration calls to discretion. Consider the time—how brief. We have no time to sleep. You have a lamp to trim—a soul, a faith. Immortality is entrusted to you. What vigilance is needed!

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 43.

Chap. xxv., ver. 8.—"Our lamps are gone out."

I. "OUR lamps are gone out." The horror of the cry; all that is compressed in it; what secrets of slovenly lives which only half suspected their own slovenliness. Numbers of dying people are uttering it daily; if it could be heard and understood, it would surely crush all creatures into silence, it is so thrilling, so significant, a whole, boundless eternity echoing it so wildly.

II. You see they had got lamps: they had been at the pains to buy oil: once their lamps were not out.

III. They had been watching and wakeful nearly all their lives.

IV. And now they did not go away—go after the world—they only slept: *i.e.* they took things easily; it was troublesome to be always on their guard; they relaxed the wakefulness of prayer; they let their consciences get indistinct. But the good slept also; yes! and even they ran a hideous risk; but before that they had repented, they had done much, they had not merely trusted to faith, to feelings, and to outward devotions. The midnight cry takes all by surprise.

V. Haste to bring oil; the Bridegroom comes; the doors are shut. "Lord, Lord, open to us." All is still; no voice from within. He spake once, and He confirmed it with His Amen, the gentler positiveness of which had been heard by the lake-side, and on the green hill, and in the cornfield, and in the Temple court. Oh those shut doors! how fair, how beautiful is all within those doors—a land of golden light, of purest

happiness, of everlasting life. "Lord, Lord, open to us!" Oh, foolish, foolish virgins, those doors will never open more!

F. W. FABER, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. i., p. 142.

REFERENCES: xxv. 8.—F. W. Farrar, *In the Days of Thy Youth*, p. 41; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, No. 25; H. P. Hughes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 410; J. Jackson, *Church Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 241.

Chap. xxv., ver. 10.—"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut."

NOTE three sad features of the foolish virgins' case which the text presents.

I. Their Neglect. Having equipped themselves duly for taking part in the wedding march, by kindling their lamps, they omitted to ensure that the equipment should be maintained, carrying with them no oil for their lamps. There they were, *at the moment*, all right, in a condition of beautiful fitness; had the bridegroom burst upon them at once, over the hill upon the slope of which they gathered expectantly, there would have been no lack in them; they would have swept on brilliantly; but the trial to which his late arrival subjected them they had thoughtlessly failed to arm themselves for. They had not recognised the wisdom of making provision to keep alive the light they bore.

II. Their Unreadiness. Through not having made provision for keeping their lamps alight, they were unprepared to attend the bridegroom; they missed the opportunity of joining the marriage procession, and accompanying it to the feast. "Watch," says Christ, "for ye know not the hour." The grand thing is to stand equipped—equipped for entering into and taking possession of whatever shall come. Life is a perpetual advent. The marriage supper is always laid in some guise or other. See to it, that you miss none of the things that are provided; but by preserving and fostering the divine in you—"Be ye also ready."

III. Their Irretrievable Loss. In consequence of their unreadiness for that wedding festival, in which otherwise they might have participated, they were shut out for ever. There were the music and the joy, they were not for them, and never could be for them. It is not hinted, by any means, that their lamps never flamed again—that in going to buy they found the shops all closed, and were unable to supply themselves with

fresh oil. On the contrary, it would seem to be implied in the fact of their subsequent reappearance and then confident application for admittance to the banquet chamber, that they were no longer the bearers of extinguished lamps, but had succeeded in getting them revived and relighted; only they were too late for the feast. It is never too late to repent, to improve, to make a fresh beginning and enter upon a new life—few as may be the years that are left for growth and progress—little as may be the strength which is left with which to climb.

S. A. TIPPLE, *Echoes of Spoken Words*, p. 225

Chap. xxv., ver. 10.—"And the door was shut."

OBSERVE here.

I. The Description of the Closing-up of the Final Chance. The shut door is the token of the passing away of the latest chance of entry. No one's penitence, no one's prayer, no one's groaning—shall any more open it. This sentence tells of the close, the irrevocable close, of one stage of man's being; the shutting-off the great chance of life, as the several chances of infancy and youth were shut off before. That shutting of the everlasting door, it is but the consummation of a line of providences which has been continued from man's birth; it is but God doing what God has always done. God hastens on men's steps from one stage of life to another, each stage coloured and influenced by what went before; each, when past, to be lived again no more. The hand of the clock points to the hour, and lo! at that moment the door is shut.

II. But there is yet another truth symbolled in the shut door. It is the final and complete severance between good and evil, between those who serve God and those who serve Him not, which we read here. Between the lost and the blessed is the impenetrable barrier—the iron door, which, once shut, none may open; like the pillar of fire and cloud, brilliant on the one side with gold and jewels to the saved—shadowing the lost, on the other, in intolerable gloom. Now in this total and entire separation of the good and the bad, a vast deal is again taught us. Here upon earth the righteous and the unrighteous, the faithful and the unfaithful, are intermingled; the holy exercising an unconscious but certain influence upon the unholy. The wicked if once bidden to depart away from the presence of God, away from the company of saints, away into a world of their own, must, by very reason of their separation from holier beings, themselves year after year sink into a deeper and deeper pit of

rebellion and hatred. And this is the second truth which the text intimates. The entire cutting off of the host of the wicked from the presence of the just, the leaving them without, to act upon each other apart from every purer influence, and so to drift farther and farther away from holiness and God;—this is the consummation dimly hinted in the words which, even as we read them carelessly, sound big with despair: "And the door was shut."

J. R. WOODFORD, *Sermons on Subjects from the New Testament*, p. 14.

CONSIDER: I. The exclusion from the marriage supper of the Lamb of the foreign and disturbing element of sin. The higher the degree of spirituality, the greater is the abhorrence and hatred of evil: and the grief at prevailing corruption is one distinguishing mark of the true people of Christ. It is impossible for the Christian to be satisfied with the world as it is. Therefore it is that the believer looketh to the coming of his Lord, which is to introduce a new order, and bring in the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. What we wish for is, not to be unclothed, but to be clothed upon; to have the sin purged out of us, and the new spiritual bodies imparted to us; to see a new order and a new harmony springing up around us, at the coming of the Lord. Such meaning, then, I find in the words: "And the door was shut."

II. The perfect security of the true believer. Not only are the foolish virgins shut out, but the wise are shut in. I hold the perfect ultimate security of every true believer; of every one who being born again of the Spirit has been made a new creature in Christ Jesus. But, at the same time, this is a fact not always revealed to every regenerate man. And those who grasp it at times, to their great comfort, are oftentimes found to lose it at others. Perhaps the number of those persons, who enjoy the full, unclouded, unbroken sunshine of a perfect assurance of salvation is comparatively small. But with the coming of Christ comes the sense of perfect security; of a condition unalterable, unassailable, eternal. The door is shut upon the wise virgins —and so shall they ever be with the Lord.

III. The weary period of watching is over when Christ comes, and the period of unalloyed happiness begins. They went in with Him to the marriage. The Church now is in the condition of a wife absent from her husband. She receives tokens of his affection. He sends her messages from afar; assurance of his love; promises of his coming; but she has not himself and she

longs for the time when the weary waiting and watching shall be over. This is the position of the Church of Christ—watching now for the Heavenly Bridegroom, expecting His advent, and assured of His love; and yet not able to enter into the fulness of her joy until He Himself arrives, and takes her to His heavenly home.

G. CALTHROP, *Pulpit Recollections*, p. 247.

REFERENCES: xxv. 10.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 50; J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Children*, p. 127; H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 353; see also *Advent Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 192; J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 6th series, p. 184.

Chap, xxv., vers. 10-13.

I. WHO are ready? All are not ready. This parable shows that all who make a profession of being Christ's are not ready. The foolish virgins appeared to be ready. They had their robe, their lamp, their wick and flame; yet they were not ready. (1) Those who have the wedding garment. The wedding garment is the righteousness of God—the skirt of Jesus cast over the soul—the imputed righteousness. This is the first part of readiness to meet the Heavenly Bridegroom. Do not mistake. It is not (*a*) a knowledge of this righteousness; (*b*) a desire to have this righteousness; (*c*) the having it once put over us, and then something else afterwards; (*a*) this fine linen must be granted unto us for ever. (2) Those who have the new heart. Can two walk together except they be agreed? It is impossible that two souls can be happy together if they love opposite things. (3) Those whose lamps are trimmed. While the wise virgins slept they were not ready. True, they had the wedding garment and the oil in their vessels; but their lamp was dim, their eyes were closed; but when they heard the cry they arose and trimmed their lamps, and now they are ready to meet and enter with the Bridegroom.

II. The reward of those who were ready. "They went in with Him to the marriage." (1) Christ will own them. Christ will take them in before His Father and say: "Behold, I and the children whom Thou hast given Me." (2) Saints shall be with Christ. "Went in with Him."

III. The fate of hypocrites—"the door was shut." The door of Christ stands wide open a long time, but shuts at last. When Christ comes the door will be shut. Enter in at the strait gate.

R. M. MCCHEYNE, *Additional Remains*, p. 470.

THE Foolish Virgins excluded.

I. In the words, "the door was shut," considered in reference to those persons who are represented by the "foolish virgins," we have the intimation of a most solemn truth: that to all whose hearts are not truly given to God—to all who are not united to Christ by a living, saving faith—there comes a period after which change is impossible. In some cases, of course, that period is death. In other cases, again (though these, we trust, are exceedingly few), there seems too much reason to believe that the day of hopeless, irretrievable hardness comes before the termination of the natural life. But there is a third period, after which all spiritual change becomes impossible; and that is the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. To this period especially the parable refers. As the Lord finds us, so we remain for ever. "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."

II. Note, in the next place, not only the fruitless appeal of the virgins—"Lord, Lord, open to us," but also the reason assigned for their utter rejection, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." It is not, then, merely that they have come a moment or two too late,—but it is that their coming in late proves that there is an estrangement of heart which separates them from the Saviour. It might seem somewhat hard that the difference of a few minutes more, or a few minutes less, should make all the tremendous difference between an eternity of bliss and an eternity of woe. But the fact is, that in the approach of the foolish virgins after the door was shut, we have a sure indication that that preparation of the heart is lacking in them, which alone could fit them for the enjoyment of the presence of the Lord. They cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us." But why? Not because their hearts are at one with their Master, and they cannot be happy if they are separated from Him whom they love. No; but because they shrink from the outer darkness of the exclusion, and the reproach of conscience to which they find themselves condemned. It is the cry of those who wish to be delivered from the punishment of sin; but who have no sense of its pollution—no longing to be liberated from its burden—no desire to be set free from its power.

G. CALTHROP, *Pulpit Recollections*, p. 261.

REFERENCES: xxv. 11.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 254. xxv. 13.—R. W. Forrest, *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 81; *New Manual of Sunday School Addresses*, p. 204.

Chap. xxv., vers. 14, 15.—"For the kingdom of Heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods," etc.

UNEQUAL Gifts.

At the very opening of this parable we shall encounter a thought which touches on the saddest and most irritating problem that our century has tried to solve; that of the origin of inequalities. Jesus here unhesitatingly attributes it to God. He compares God to a master who divides unequally his goods. He does not say (1) that the master loves those least to whom he gives least. (2) He does not say that the master acts capriciously; on the contrary, he gives it to be understood that He acts in His wisdom, since each of the servants receives: "according to his several ability." (3) He does not say that this unequality lasts beyond the time of trial, that is to say, beyond the present life. The two faithful servants who had received different shares obtain the same reward and they enter into the joy of their master. But, these reserves made, let us acknowledge that Jesus Christ says clearly that the master gave to one, five talents; to another, two; to the other, one.

I. That which Jesus Christ says, Nature equally says. Absolute equality in no way exists in Nature, for absolute equality, if you consider it, would be uniformity; now there is nothing less uniform than the works of God.

II. Not only is this inequality a fact, but it is besides a social bond between men, it obliges them to trust to each other, because it is the affirmation of their mutual dependence.

III. What should we do before this fact? Accept it so far as it does not wound the conscience. Accept it in seeking to lessen it, to smooth down its asperities; but accept it at length, humbly, manfully, without murmuring. You are poor; you are a workman; you serve; you are not among those who are called the privileged ones of this world; you have not ten talents—only one talent. What does it matter? Are you the less loved by God for that? Are you less a man, a child of God, an immortal soul? Look at your life in its true greatness, in the light of eternity; say that if you serve, Jesus, the Son of God, the King of souls, served and suffered; say that His hands, before being raised to bless humanity, were hardened by holding the instruments of labour; say that our true nobility, our true dignity, we owe to those children of the people who are called Peter, Andrew, Philip and James; and that since Christ has saved humanity in serving and suffering for it, there

is no solid greatness and lasting glory but that which is gained in serving and giving up oneself.

E. BERSIER, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 1.

Chap. xxv., vers. 14-30.

IN the case of the unprofitable servant as it emerges in the latter portion of the parable, three points demand our attention separately and successively—the Reason, the Nature, and the Reward of his unfaithfulness.

I. The *reason* of his unfaithfulness, as explained by himself is, "I knew thee that thou art an hard man," etc. The parable represents at once, with rich personal effect and strict logical exactness, the legal relation of sinful men to a righteous God, apart from the peace that comes through the Gospel. While you think of the Judge—recording now your thoughts, words, and actions, in order to render unto you what you deserve at the great day—you cannot love Him, and you do not like to retain the knowledge of Him in you mind. Whatever your ears may hear, or your lips may speak, you know God only as the disturber of your joy in life, and the inexorable exacter of impossible penalties at last. The natural and necessary, as well as actual, result of this knowledge or conception of the master, is the utter idleness of the servant.

II. As to its *nature*, the disobedience was not active but passive; he did not positively injure his master's property, he simply failed to turn it to profitable account. The terror of this servant was too lively to admit of his enjoying a debauch purchased by the treasure which had been placed under his charge. Fear is a powerful motive in certain directions and for certain effects; it makes itself felt in the heart, and leaves its mark on the life of a man; unfruitfulness includes both those that bear bad fruit and those that bear no fruit. The idleness of the servant, who knew his master only as a hard man, reproves all except those who obey the Lord whom they love, and love the Lord whom they obey.

III. The *reward* of unfaithfulness is: "Take the talent from him and cast him out." In both parts the sentence of condemnation corresponds to its opposite in the reception of those who had been faithful to their trust. These retain their employed gifts; from him the unused talent is taken away. These are received into their master's favour; he is cast out of his master's sight. The stumbling-block at the outset that turned the unfaithful servant aside was his conception of his

lord as a hard master; it is the experience of the master's love that impels the servant forward in the path of duty. When we know God in Christ we know Him reconciled to ourselves. Christ, therefore, is the way; by Him we go *in* to the Father for acceptance, and by Him we go *out* for needful work upon the world. W. ARNOT, *The Parables of Our Lord*, p. 299.

DIFFERENT Talents yielding Equal Rewards.

I. In interpreting the introductory portion of this parable the word "talents" must be taken as including all that fits a man for God's service—as well what belongs to his own nature as what is external to himself. The "ability" is a gift from God as well as the goods. When considering what we possess as fitting us for doing the will of God, each one may hear the question, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" All that a man is and has must be included among God's gifts, to be made account of when the working season here is over. Talents, means, and opportunities must all be reckoned as Divinely supplied. When so regarded there is great diversity among the disciples.

II. In the picture of the meeting-time and reckoning, the truth lying nearest, full of encouragement while we are in the present work, is, that results proportionate to opportunities will fill each servant with satisfaction on the great and solemn occasion when he renders account of his earthly life. Our responsibilities are fixed for us; what they are is discovered to us by each day of service as it comes; to meet daily obligations, by a day of faithful work, is to do the part our Master requires of us, and thus prepare for ourselves a harvest of joy on the day of His coming. The joy of the faithful servant has its counterpart in the joy of his Master. Our Lord's gladness is as His servants', and His servants' is as their Lord's; His joy finds its objects in their work, with its abiding results. As He manifests and expresses this joy it awakens new gladness in their hearts; their joy is thenceforth embraced in His. To long-tested faithfulness our Lord appoints enlarged service and greater rewards. Devotedness in this world introduces to enlarged opportunities in the next world. In the heavenly kingdom, where righteousness reigns in man, extended favour comes from God, life is progressive in ever-increasing ratio.

III. (vers. 24-30).—The parable closes with a vivid and impressive representation of unfaithfulness on a servant's part and the consequent displeasure of his master. That the man

who received the single talent is taken to represent unfaithfulness in God's service is a significant fact. Remembering the principle of distribution acted upon by the master, the smallness of the trust committed to the third servant was in accordance with the judgment formed of him. We are thus guided to the state of his character first and only afterwards to the extent of ability. The result shows that it is character, not restricted ability, which determines the form and direction of life. Common faithfulness has common approval; unfaithfulness must meet its condemnation. The test is found in the state of the heart, not in the extent of the possessions. Hard thoughts of God will find their condemnation when brought to the test of Divine requirements. It will then appear that God did not seek to reap where He had not sown; that He did not expect of any one that which He had not Himself provided in means and opportunity. He shall ask no more than that He receive His own with its produce. Before that demand, hard thoughts shall recoil on the mind which cherished them. The rules of Divine judgment now become apparent in two distinct forms. (1) The unemployed talent is transferred to one who will use it well. There are many Divinely given talents which so belong to personal existence, that we cannot think of them being transferred to others. In view of this, it will be remarked, that our Lord has taken external possessions as affording illustrations of the truth proclaimed. He that hath not in the form of produce shall have taken from him even that which for a season he has been allowed to hold as a possession committed to his trust. (2) The unfaithful servant is himself cast out from the presence of the Lord. H. CALDERWOOD, *The Parables of Our Lord*, p. 404.

REFERENCES: xxv. 14.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 4; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 133. xxv. 14-16.—J. Crofts, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 15. xxv. 14-27.—E. M. Goulburn, *Thoughts on Personal Religion*, p. 340. xxv. 14-30.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 180; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 387; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 483; W. M. Taylor, *Parables of Our Saviour*, p. 180. xxv. 15.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Children*, p. 9; M. Dods, *The Parables*, p. 257.

Chap. xxv., vers. 16-21.

THE Servants at Work.

I. It is the great law of labour which the Gospel affirms here, in the example of those two men doubling the talents they had received. The first gift of God is multiplied in their skilful and faithful hands. What is the nature of the labour of the industry

of these faithful servants? Must we understand by it simply putting into activity natural gifts, physical strength, the intellect, the material resources which each man brings into this world? And did Jesus simply wish to give here a lesson upon order, upon economy, upon a good understanding of human life, as any Jewish Rabbi might have done had he judged, strange thing, that his compatriots had not their minds wakeful enough on this point, and that it was necessary to inculcate the spirit of calculation, and what might be called the genius for business? Such an explanation makes us smile. The ancient Church did not admit it. By the talents which are here spoken of, are usually understood all the graces purely spiritual which Jesus, Head of the Church, distributed to all its members, but in an unequal manner. This second explanation is worth infinitely more than the first, and yet it also is insufficient; the parable has a wider sense. The talents signify all graces which come to us from God, spiritual and natural gifts, graces of the soul or temporal benefits. All can be sanctified, all can be consecrated to God, all can be multiplied in Christian hands.

II. The essential, the most urgent, thing is not to do works of piety, works which can be counted, and which can be arranged under such and such a title. The essential, the most urgent, thing is to give our hearts to God in such a way that God once possessing them we serve Him wherever we go, and in whatever sphere we act. If such be the nature of the labour which God demands, what man is there who will dare to say that he cannot multiply for the service of God the gifts he has received? Nothing is excluded from His kingdom, nothing except sin. As long as the sun shines on your horizon; as long as the Gospel, that sun of the soul, gives you light; as long as you have a breath of light—there is time to hope, there is time to begin again, there is time to count on Him who restores, who regenerates, who transforms the desert into a garden, and who causes water even to burst forth from a rock. "If any man be in Christ," says St. Paul, ". . . old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God."

E. BERSIER, *Sermons*, p. 11.

REFERENCE: xxv. 18.—R. Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 209.

Chap. xxv., vers. 19-30.

THE Account to be rendered.

I. Is not the servant who had received least a type of the insignificant of the earth, of the immense mass of those who are

commonly called the *prolétaires*—the disinherited of here below? Why does Jesus show him alone to be guilty, alone justly punished, whilst an approbation without reserve is given to those who have received much, and who only have been faithful? Is it thus, then, that things go on? Should the Divine lesson have been directed to that side? Is it not rather the rich and powerful of this world who should be made to hear it? Is it not the representative of the poor who should inherit the talents of the unfaithful man? And instead of those pitiless words: "To every one that hath shall be given," words which seem to justify and cover all the usurpations of force, should it not be written: "To every one that hath not shall be given"? To this painful question how shall we reply? Very simply. The reproach is addressed to Jesus. Well, do you know any one who loved the poor as Jesus did? Doubtless Jesus knew the miserable abuse which the powerful of this world would make of their power, the rich of their riches, and all privileged ones of their privileges. But He knew also that other seeds of hatred and death—ingratitude, discouragement, despair, anger, and blasphemy—would germinate in other spheres, and they are what He shows at work in the soul of the unfaithful, indolent, and mutinous servant.

II. Mediocrity has its temptations, and Jesus lets us know them here. They are (1) envy, (2) ingratitude, (3) contempt of duty, (4) the impiety which blasphemes.

III. The greatest things done in the Church have been the work of those who had only one talent. We judge otherwise, I know; we see at a distance only high summits, only resounding names and prominent works. Look nearer. There, where only these were, nothing has lasted. That which constituted the form and the immovable weft of the Church in its greatest epochs were the obscure Christians, the heroes of silent love, the thousands of unknown ones whose names fill the martyrology of the first centuries; yes, it is the common soldiers who win the victory in the great battles of God.

E. BERSIER, *Sermons*, p. 23.

Chap. xxv., vers. 20, 21.—"And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, Thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more," etc.

FIDELITY and Recompense.

I. The teaching of this parable, although addressed at first to the disciples, is not to be limited to them, nor to any who, like

them, are charged with the fulfilment of a special duty; it is teaching for us all. It implies a common responsibility for the use of talents which have been universally distributed, although not in equal measure. Talents have been given to us, and they are neither to be hoarded in fruitless avarice nor squandered in unprofitable waste. They are to be laid out, used for God, and so laid out that in wonderful usury they may double themselves in their returns, bringing for this blessed service the gold of holy character and the precious stones gathered from the world's dark mines, and gathered by our hands, to sparkle in the Redeemer's crown.

II. The second thought which I wish to put before you is that this responsibility is all-pervading, it extends to the whole man and to the whole life. It takes in the uncounted trifles, "the thoughts of the heart," the subtle and delicate springs of action, the things done in secret as well as the prominence of characters and circumstance; the tremendous issues of our lives, our crisis, the things which come with observation, and flaunt and flower before the eyes of men. With God the motive determines the value of the action. He takes no account of the great things in man's life *as* great things, nor of small things because of their smallness. He taketh pleasure in great and small equally when they are worthily done—done from the same all-pervading, habitual, and almost unconscious desire to make His will the law. It is in the single-hearted obedience, in the fulness of the loyal love, that He rejoices even with exceeding joy.

III. The recompense of fidelity. Faithfulness, though it may have embraced but a little, is not suffered to go without its reward. It is inseparable from the idea of responsibility, and its consequent idea of judgment, that there should be the sanctions of reward and penalty, the rendering to every man according to his deeds. God is certainly not less righteous than man; and if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto those who serve us faithfully, how much more shall He in whom eternal justice and infinite compassion blend, both praise and recompense the service which is done for Him! Faithfulness is rewarded: (1) By increased power—every duty performed makes future duty easier; (2) by increased responsibility—found faithful in a farthing, the man is made "ruler over many things." And this is God's law of recompense, to reward work well done by more and greater work.

W. Morley Punshon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 104; see also *Sermons at Union Chapel, Islington*, p. 191.

Chap. xxv., ver. 21.—"His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

BEFORE us is a servant of Jesus Christ, and we have to consider: (1) His Character, (2) his Conduct, (3) his Reward.

I. His Character. "Good and faithful;" good, personally virtuous, and efficient as a servant. (1) A good and faithful servant accepts his position as a servant, with all that is included in that position. He is not striving for something else. (2) A good and faithful servant bears the work and burden of his servitude. He does not shirk. (3) A good and faithful servant renders service with hearty goodwill. (4) A good and faithful servant is obedient to his master. His will is in subjection. (5) A good and faithful servant has his master's interest ever before him. No eyeservice. (6) A good and faithful servant is profitable to his master.

II. The Conduct upon which this character is based. "Thou hast been faithful over a few things,"—over the five talents delivered to him by his master. The inner character is the source of action; the outer character is the impression made by our actions. Every man has a double character; a character within and without. A few things were given to the servant before us—five talents—that he might trade with them and make them more. And this was sufficient as a basis of character; it justified the words "good and faithful."

III. The Commendation and Reward. (1) This is real commendation, not a commendation of self—false, deceitful, delusive; but commendation by another, without flattering or hypocrisy; not in ignorance or prejudice, but with sound judgment and perfect knowledge. (2) This is full and complete commendation, Full as to manner and spirit. Full as to source. It is a "Well done!" from Him who doeth all things well. Full as to substance and meaning. What can be added to it? And full as to influence and effect. It is a "Well done!" that will inspire the doer with will to do, and with power to do, for ever and ever. (3) This is a useful commendation. It qualifies him to whom it is addressed to do something more, something better, something higher. S. MARTIN, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 215.

FIDELITY and Dominion.

I. All human endowment and its largest results are small, measured by the standards of God's kingdom. To the holder

of the five talents, as to the holder of the two, it is said: "Thou hast been faithful over a *few things*." Human endowment and human performance, the few things, get their significance from their relation to the many things—the great, thronging facts and principles and laws of the kingdom of God. Obedience, responsibility, duty, work, love, trust—all that makes up Christian life here—are sides and manifestations of the unseen spiritual universe. The man who is administering a moral trust, discharging duties, improving gifts, is within the circumference of that kingdom which spans eternity and the universe; and it is that part which gives a meaning and value to his few things.

II. Work and accomplishment, in themselves, are trivial because they do not involve mastery. Look at our Lord's words: "Good servant, thou has been *faithful* over a few things, I will *set thee over* many things." The word is habitually used of putting in a position of authority or mastery. Good and faithful people are constantly tempted to identify success with accomplishment, and to think that they fail because they cannot do what they set out to do. But you observe that God gives no promise of mastery for this world. He sets upon true and good work, not the seal of accomplishment, which is a thing of to-day, but the great moral seal of the eternal heavenly kingdom, which is faithfulness.

III. And yet the parable very clearly shows us that faithfulness is on the direct line of mastery. "Thou hast been faithful, therefore I will make thee ruler." Fidelity tends and leads up to mastery.

IV. Fidelity to the few things carries with it the promise of fidelity to the many.

V. The parable fixes our attention less upon the work than upon the worker; or, perhaps, we might better say, upon the work *through* the worker. The satisfaction of the master lies, not in the fact that his five talents have grown into ten, but in that the increase is due to his servant's faithfulness. In God's eyes the best and highest result of work is a good worker. It is faithfulness, not amount, which links the talent to the joy of the Lord, the few things to the many.

M. R. VINCENT, *God and Bread*, p. 117.

INDUSTRY.

These are two or three reasons which make it easy for us to see this duty from a wrong point of view, and to miss its

very great and sacred importance. The first is, that it is to many, perhaps to most, a very distasteful one. It is a positive, not a negative, duty; it requires you to do, not only to abstain; and it requires you to do heartily, to put some life and spirit into what you do—and if the duty be against the grain this calls for a considerable effort. And again, it is a duty from whose exactions we are never free, which wakes with us in the morning, and pursues us even when we are weary at night. But there is another and a more respectable reason why we undervalue it. Our own experience tells us that there are blacker sins than idleness, and that there are more delicate and heavenly forms of goodness than industry, forms of goodness more penetrating, more rare, which more manifestly have their reward not here but in the sight of the Father in heaven. Consider some reasons for the high and sacred importance which attaches to the duty of industry, of hearty, manly activity in the daily work of life which God appoints us.

I. And first, its high importance rests on the fact that it is so plain a duty. You cannot doubt that it is a duty. What can be the meaning of the parables which speak of us all as servants set to work for a master, who will return to take account, each with talents to be used, and by using to be increased for his service, if we may grow idle and let our powers dwindle instead of growing without blame?

II. It is a duty which is the Divine remedy and safeguard against an infinite amount of evil. If you would flee from evil, fill up the empty hour, the vacant, listless mind. Be a man, set to work, look life in the face, think what you are going to do and to be. There is no time for dreaming, for tampering with forbidden thoughts, for childish follies and boyish extravagances.

III. A third and last reason. It is a duty, with a far-reaching purpose and reward. I am not speaking at this moment of the more tangible secondary purposes which all can understand. They vary to different lives. But for all these are the great moral purposes. Now is the time when, more than ever, the habits of your life must be formed. The great Taskmaster gives us our faculties—to one five talents, to another two, to another only one; but the five may become one, and the one may become five. Happy is that faithful servant whom his Lord when He comes shall find honestly working at the task he set him.

E. C. WICKHAM, *Wellington College Sermon*, p. 67.

REFERENCES: xxv. 21.—Spurgeon. *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1,541;

J. Keble, *Sermons from Easter to Ascension Day*, pp. 108, 118; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, p. 301; R. Norton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 182; H. Allon, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvi., p. 17; G. Matheson, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. vi., p. 204. xxv. 22, 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 175; S. G. Matthews, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 214. xxv. 23.—F. W. Farrar, *In the Days of Thy Youth*, p. 61.

Chap. xxv., ver. 24.—"Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed."

Sordid Knowledge.

I. These are very remarkable words. Observe how positively the man speaks: "I knew thee that thou art an hard man." He is quite sure of it, and has no fear of being contradicted even when advancing the plea to his lord himself. Indeed it is his excuse, his hope of acquittal. He trusts to it for safety, so sure is he of his ground. And, indeed, we may easily see, even from the parable itself, much grounds for the charge. Why should the man toil and work with money which was not his own, and vex himself with anxious cares at a master's command? Was not the command hard from this point of view. Might he not well say "I knew thee that thou art an hard man," as day by day he worked and was weary, and faint and full of care? The very force of his answer as a warning seems to lie in the truth of this low reasoning as far as it went. Let the man forget his duty as a slave trusted by his absent master, and start with this mean low opinion, and every after-step would be most logically convincing. But observe, the work though done at his master's command would have been done for himself. His great generous lord entrusted his servants with what seemed to be work for him, but was, indeed, a training in honour and power for them. The niggard spirit, with its low logic could not understand that; but could see clearly the hardships and pain of the work, and refused to work and so lost his own gains,—the glorious gains that might have been his.

II. Yet he ought to have done his master's work at all events. The right and wrong of it was not his business. The man was a slave, his business was to obey, and his lord answered him on his own grounds. He was bound to obey as a slave and justly condemned for not doing so. Once begin in a wrong spirit, and every step you take will bring you a more and more certain knowledge that your low, mean thoughts are right. No

power of argument could make people walking in a mist believe in a bright sun overhead; they must get upon higher ground to feel it; every step below would but confirm their cold knowledge. So it is with our spirits; we must rise into a higher world of love and honour and faith, living with Christ, looking to His glorious example, following Him in trustful love. Then we shall learn the happiness of His commands; then we shall feel that it is for our own sakes that they are given to enrich and ennoble us.

E. THRING, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. i., p. 1.

OF all the powers of which men easily think that they are wholly or almost destitute, and so from whose exercise they think themselves excused, the one most commonly alleged, I think, is the religious power, the whole spiritual faculty in general. The reason why many people are not Christians is that they misrepresent Christianity to themselves, that they have not conceived its simplicity. Am I right when I believe that there is in every man the power to take it in this simplicity, and make it his new life? I do believe so, fully, and for various reasons.

I. The first reason of all is one that is no reason except to him who is already a believer, but surely to him it must come very strongly. It does seem to me that no man can really seem to himself to be living a spiritual life, and not hold with all his heart as a possibility, and long to see realised as a fact, the spiritual life in every soul of every son of man. If I truly thought that there was any one man who really was, as so many men have told me that they were, incapable of spirituality, I should lose my whole faith in the capacity of spirituality in any man.

II. And then, another reason why we have a right to believe that there is in every man a capacity for fundamental and essential Christianity, lies in the fact that the activities of such a Christianity really demand only those powers which in ordinary human life we all hold to be absolutely universal.

III. If thus the spiritual life is something not strange in its essence, but familiar; if its working force consists of the simplest and most fundamental of the powers of humanity brought into contact with, and filled full of, a Divine influence, then another thing which we see continually is not strange. There are certain experiences in every human life which have their power just in this, that they break through the elaborate sur-

face, and get down to the simplest thoughts and emotions of the human heart. And if that heart, laid open, is inevitably, universally spiritual, what does it prove but this, that when the simplest base of any man's life is reached, when the ground above it is torn off by an earthquake, or melted bare by the sunshine of happiness, there is the capacity of spirituality, the soil in which the spiritual seed must grow?

IV. When Jesus Christ, the typal man, appeared, He was not only one who hungered and thirsted, who loved and hated, who dreaded and hoped, who suffered and enjoyed, but He was one whose nature leaped beyond the mere material and grasped the spiritual. To believe in the Incarnation, really to understand Christ, and yet to think that we or any other men in all the world are essentially incapable of spiritual living, is an impossibility.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Sermons*, p. 138.

REFERENCES: xxv. 24,25.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 6th series, p. 177; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. ii., p. 181. xxv. 28.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 107.

Chap. xxv., ver. 29.

TALENTS improved are multiplied; talents misimproved are resumed by their owner. Apply this principle of the Divine government: (1) To personal endowments; (2) to providential advantages; (3) to religious privileges; (4) to spiritual blessings; (5) to opportunities of Christian work.

G. BROOKS, *Five Hundred Outlines of Sermons*, p. 372.

REFERENCES: xxv. 29.—R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. i., p. 165. xxv. 30.—J. Natt, *Plain Sermons*, p. 384; S. Greg, *A Layman's Legacy*, p. 135.

Chap. xxv., vers. 31-3.

I. WHEN we turn to the Book of God in order to learn what particulars are revealed to us respecting the awful coming of the Lord, the first thing which strikes us is its suddenness. When it will be we know not; where it will be we know not. It must suffice for us that it will be as sudden as the lightning flash; and that, wherever in the round world it is, we shall be there, as certainly as the eagles gather to the fallen carcase.

II. There shall be only two companies—the saved and the lost. No middle place; no place for those who might hope to find themselves average people—neither particularly faithful, nor

particularly unfaithful; only two companies with a mighty chasm between them—the lowest of the blessed company of those that are received inexpressibly more blessed than the first of those that are excluded.

III. "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, . . . ye did it not unto Me." What an astonishing, what an awful Scripture this is! Can we not conceive how, when we stand before that judgment-seat, our consciences will be full of all manner of sad recollections of sin—remembering how we have broken this and that commandment, hoping that this and that palliation may be admitted for our forgiveness, and behold, even before the question of our actual offences committed is opened at all, behold we are condemned for our *omissions!* Christ was with us, among us, always with us in His poor people, and we did not do all we could for them when we had time.

IV. The judgment will be very different from an earthly judgment. There will be no witnesses, no counsellors, no examination. There will be no selection of particular charges against us, then for the first time to be brought up, proved, and punished. Nothing at all like that. The judgment is going on *now*, every day and every hour our hearts lie open before God, and as we obey or disobey, as we pray or refrain from praying, as we utter bad words or good ones, as we let our thoughts run to sin, or check them and turn them towards God and heaven, the judgment gathers round them. If we are living carelessly, and thinking little about God and Christ, the shadows of judgment are deepening round about us. If we die so—not repenting of our sins, nor turning to God in faith—the final judgment will only pronounce what will have settled itself before, what is, indeed, settling itself every day: settling itself for good or evil every day that we live.

G. MOBERLY, *Plain Sermons at Brighton*, p. 304.

REFERENCES: xxv. 31.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 272. xxv. 31,32.—*New Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 16; E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, vol. ii., p. 41. xxv. 31-6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 671. xxv. 31-46.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 122.

Chap. xxv., ver. 32.—"And He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats."

THE Final Separation.

1. Its Author. (1) His ability. (2) His prerogative.

II. Its Nature. (1) Its exactness. (2) Its completeness. (3) Its consequences in respect to place and employment and interest.

III. Its Principle. (1) On the ground of character. (2) The test of character is the state of mind and heart toward the Redeemer. (3) The evidence of a right state of mind and heart toward the Redeemer is the treatment of His people.

G. BROOKS, *Five Hundred Outlines of Sermons*, p. 335.

REFERENCE: xxv. 32.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1,234.

Chap. xxv., vers. 34-7.

THE Surprise of the Righteous.

I. The special peculiarity of the persons of whom our Lord here speaks, is that they did not know, that they had no suspicion, that in showing kindness to men, they were showing kindness to Christ. "Lord," they answer, "when saw we Thee?" It is a revelation to them, in the strictest and deepest sense of the word. A revelation, that is an unveiling, a drawing away of a veil which was before their eyes, and hiding from them a Divine and most blessed fact, of which they had been unaware. But who are they? I think we must agree with some of the best commentators, that they are persons who, till the day of judgment, have never heard of Christ; but who then, for the first time, as Dean Alford says, "are overwhelmed with the sight of the grace which has been working in upon them and the glory which is now their blessed portion."

II. If this be the true meaning of our Lord's words, what comfort and hope they may give us, when we think, as we are bound to think, if we have a true humanity in us, of the hundreds of millions of heathens now alive, and of the thousands of millions of heathens who have lived and died! Sinful they are as a whole. Sinning, it may be without law, but perishing without law. For the wages of sin are death, and can be nothing else. But may not Christ have His elect among them? May not His Spirit be working in some of them? They are Christ's lost sheep, but they are still His sheep who hear His voice. May He not fulfil His own words to them, and go forth and seek such souls, and lay them on His shoulder and bring them home, saying to His Church on earth, and to His Church in heaven: "Rejoice with Me; for I have found My sheep which was lost"?

III. How shall we know Christ's sheep when we see them? How, but by the very test which Christ has laid down, it seems

to me, in this very parable? Is there in one of them the high instincts—even the desire to do a merciful act? Let us watch for that: and when in the most brutal man or woman we see any touch of nobleness, justice, benevolence, pity, tenderness—in one word, any touch, however momentary, of unselfishness—let us spring at that, knowing that there is the soul we seek; there is a lost sheep of Christ; there is Christ Himself; working unknown upon a human soul; there is a soul ready for the Gospel, and not far from the kingdom of God.

C. KINGSLEY, *All Saints' Day and Other Sermons*, p. 347.

Chap. xxv., vers. 34-41.

THE Judgment of the Nations.

Perhaps we are justified in saying that we have, in connection with these words, the most vivid description of the last judgment to be found in the Holy Bible. We learn from them that, though good works cannot merit heaven, it is a solemn fact that God Himself has made the practice of good works the condition on which He will ultimately confer the rewards of heaven. At the general judgment men are to be rewarded, not according to their faith, or according to their feelings, or according to their professions, but according to their works.

I. Let it not be said that this doctrine involves the idea that man, by the practice of good works, may make God his debtor. Not so. As the present salvation of a sinner depends upon his exercising faith in Jesus Christ—not because the exercise of faith in Jesus Christ merits such a gift, but because God, in His sovereignty, has been pleased to appoint the exercise of faith in Jesus Christ as the condition upon which the gift will be given; so a man's reward in heaven depends upon a man's own good works on earth—not because the good works merit the reward, but because God has been pleased to make the practice of good works the condition on which the reward shall be ultimately granted.

II. "Come, ye blessed of My Father." The very word implies that the righteous are to be where Christ their Saviour is. The two are to live for ever in the glorious heaven. Do not overlook the word *inherit*. Heaven is an inheritance. It belongs not to strangers and aliens, but to children. God does not give it arbitrarily to whom, in His Divine despotism, He likes, chooses, but only to sons and daughters—children. It is God's great patrimony, given to none except to members of

God's great family. And then, finally, there is another word in the 34th verse,—"Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom *prepared for you.*" Heaven is not a world which by accident was once emptied, and therefore was fixed upon to receive the righteous and be their final home. Not so. It is a place prepared for them, designed and made for them purposely; and, therefore, perfectly adapted to make them happy. It is a great residence which God has built as the eternal home of His great family—a residence in the decoration of which God lavished all His wealth and employed all His attributes, prerogatives, and powers. There is brightness in every eye—happiness in every smile. Then the purest joy keeps endless festival and revels with unmolested freedom. There shall be no more curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb is in it. His servants shall serve Him, and His Name is written on their foreheads.

L. H. TYERMAN, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 896, new series.

REFERENCES: xxv. 34, 35.—J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 100. xxv. 35.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1,757; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 39. xxv. 36-43.—J. Macpherson, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 461.

Chap. xxv., vers. 37-9.

THE Humility of the Saints.

The kingdom of heaven—this is what Christ came to introduce—to introduce into active co-operation with us poor men. He brought down out of that far place this fund of eternal and victorious forces. He put at our disposal and under our manipulation the whole resources of the Divine house. He brought heaven into activity here on earth, and we who are made members of that kingdom become media through which its energies penetrate and work, expand and make entries.

I. And this will perhaps explain the peculiar stress laid upon two Christian excellences—Humility and Thanksgiving. Humility, the rare gift of the saints, is sometimes, I believe, supposed to be a sort of compulsory lie, as if we were required to glorify God by pretending that we are not so good as we really are. But the professed humility of the saints is nothing more than the natural and normal, and true and healthy, outcome of the conditions under which we belong to the kingdom of heaven; for these conditions imply that we, so far as we rightly correspond to them, do but make ourselves channels through which the powers of God can operate, vehicles through

which they may extend their boundaries. Our Christian excellence just lies in admitting Christ. Saintliness is the energy and glory of God become active in a man. It is the display of God's grace through a human personality, and if so, it cannot help being overwhelmed with humility. The grace of this humility is the measure of the saintliness, for the more complete this self-surrender, then the more vigorously flows through it the splendour of God's fulness.

II. And then Thanksgiving. The saint has a spiritual microscope, and through it he can see at least fragments of the mysterious subtilties that operate at His bidding—all that delicate world of miracle that is ever at His service. How, then, can he ever thank God enough? This only is his desire—to be ever giving thanks; and every touch of holiness in him is a new wonder to him—a new miracle worked by God; and to recount his own labours is to recount God's successes; and all such recounting, such rehearsal, is itself a thanksgiving. In so glorying he can glory in the Lord—glory because all things are his. Paul and Apollos and Cephas, and the world and life and death, and things present and things to come—all are his and he glories in it. He gives thanks to God, for herein is his Father glorified who is in heaven.

H. SCOTT HOLLAND, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 234.

REFERENCES: xxv. 37-9.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 234. xxv. 40.—J. H. Hollowell, *Ibid.*, vol. xviii., p. 89; T. R. Evans, *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv., p. 337. xxv. 40-45.—R. Veitch, *Ibid.*, vol. xxix., p. 259. xxv. 41.—H. N. Grimley, *The Temple of Humanity*, p. 203; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 381. xxv. 44.—J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 121.

Chap. xxv., vers. 45, 46.

THE Great Reality.

I. The moment any heart thoroughly admits a great reality, and takes anything, whether truly or falsely, as a great reality, for that man all life is another thing from what it was before. And all the various opinions, delusions, and mistakes in the world, however numerous, matter no more to one who has a reality than the darkness of a forest to a man on a broad road through it. Such a reality is death. Every one of us in a few years will have left behind him earth, and all belonging to earth. How many doubts would vanish if men began early on the simple plan of trying and testing their doubts and temptations by the great certainty, death, and measuring their lives by the

after-death eye? A plain, broad road would show itself amongst the tangle and the wilderness of opinions.

II. Human life in effect, our Lord says in the text, is the way one man treats another. It is the quiet everyday habit of making life more easy to our fellow-creatures that our Blessed Lord judges to be Divine. This is what the calm after-death eye will consider to be real. The service of God has only one primary meaning—the service of God is man making others happy. No man is religious who does not strive to make others happy. The prevailing passion of daily life should be: Where is anyone weak and in trouble—can I help him? The heart ought to leap to the side of the weak, not to the side of the strong. The heart ought to have a dim feeling that everyone in pain or need is, as it were, Christ on the Cross, and a dread lest the strong, if the strong inflict the pain, are Pilate and Herod with their soldiers. The great realities of the world to come only recognise the principle of making others happy. And I am inclined to think that anyone who takes this into his heart as his reality will not get entangled if he begins early, or feel any difficulty in finding how to do it.

E. THRING, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. i., p. 185.

Chap. xxv., ver. 46.—"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

JUDGMENT by Works.

These words spake the Saviour and Judge of all mankind, intimating the unending bliss or woe of the world to come. And surely these words should be enough to stop the mouths of all reverent people. Is it not enough that Christ hath spoken? Shall poor blind mortals undertake to gainsay His statement?

I. You remember the exact ground on which the Great Judge, rehearsing that future scene, bases this tremendous separation for eternity. It is on our treatment of Himself in the daily needs of His suffering humanity that all is made to depend. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto. . .the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me." What romance there is in these familiar words! More than in all "Arabian Nights" and fairy tales put together. Suppose that as we went home to-day, we passed by one sitting on the roadside, one that was starved in body, tattered in clothes, shivering with cold, left all alone in the wide world; suppose that as he sat there crouched together, his face buried in his hands, there was yet a nameless dignity about his form, a glory which came and went about his head, which made us

know that it was Christ. How would it cut us to the heart that we should sit by warm fires and fare of the best, while He was out there in cold and misery! Ah, we say to ourselves, but that never happens in real life! Yes it does, very often; and if it never happens to us, it is only because we choose to forget that whatever kindness we show, for His sake, to the least of His brethren, we are showing, in reality to Him.

II. It is evident from the Epistles, and from the Gospels too, that we may not ever deserve or earn anything by our works,—that after all done, we must be unprofitable servants, and hope for mercy only; and it is evident from the Gospels, and from the Epistles too, that we shall never enter the kingdom of Heaven unless our righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, even in that department which was peculiarly their own—the careful fulfilment, namely, of the law. Going on these two principles, then, we shall be safe on both sides,—having good works, but not trusting in them; serving Christ with might and main, yet looking to be rewarded, not of our merit but of His mercy; thus, and thus only, shall we be safe in the last day.

R. WINTERBOTHAM, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 164.

EVERLASTING Punishment.

I. Man's conscience, until he deadens it—and most when the uncompromising reality of thoughts of death silences all voices of self-deceit—speaks out clearly, that punishment is the due reward of our deeds. But of what duration? All knowledge as to eternity must come from the Eternal, whose it is. It is a common formula of those who venture to object anything to God's revelation—it is inconceivable that God should visit passing acts of sin with an eternity of misery. But who so revealed to us that sin ceases in the evil, when life ceases? Never do men abandon sin, except by receiving God's converting grace. To sin on is nature. It grows, deepens, hardens, becomes more malignant, more ingrained, more a part of man's self until the hour of death. Why, unless changed even then by the grace of God, should it change in eternity?

II. Unchangeableness may be, for what we know, one of the laws of eternity. We know that it shall be of the blessed. Heaven could not be heaven unless they were fixed in good. And it may be an equal law of our moral nature, that those who reject God in time, even to the end, will, by a continuance of that same fixed will, reject Him everlastingly.

III. Place alone does not make heaven or hell. Hell, with the love of God, were as heaven: without the love of God, it may be, it seems even probable, that heaven would be the worse hell. As we see in Satan, the sinner, even apart from God's judgments on sin, carries about within him his own hell.

IV. Never will you know anything of the depth of sin; or of the deeper depth of the love of Christ or of God until you not only believe in the abstract, but accustom yourselves to think of that awful doom, to which each wilful rejection of God's voice in your conscience, and of God in that voice, was dragging you. Fear not to look at it. For narrow though the bridge be which spans its lurid flames, that bridge is sure to those whom it upholds; for it is the Cross of Christ, and Christ Himself will stretch forth His hand to lead thee safely over it.

E. B. PUSEY, *Selected Occasional Sermons*, p. 245.

REFERENCES: xxv. 46—H. W. Beecher, *Plymouth Pulpit Sermons*, 5th series, p. 99; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 166; T. Birkett Dover, *A Lent Manual*, p. 91. xxv.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 289. xxvi. 1-5.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 186. xxvi. 3.—A. P. Stanley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 344.

Chap. xxvi., vers. 6-13.

THE Alabaster Box.

Here is a woman—probably a poor woman—doing an action which excites the indignation of the whole Church. Not a voice is heard in her favour except—sublime exception!—the voice of Jesus. In such circumstances there must be something worth looking at. A minority which God approves must not be overlooked with heedlessness and contempt. The wisdom in this case is with the few, and the folly with the many; the wisdom is with love, not policy, with gratitude, not calculation.

The points of special interest are these:—

I. The all-surrendering generosity of love. The woman had an alabaster box of very precious ointment—only one box—and that solitary box she broke, and poured its pure nard on the only human head that had not lost its crown. Love never puts its own name upon anything. Love has some object, must have some object, on whose shrine it lays its every possession. Love, warm, intelligent, growing love, keeps back nothing from God.

II. The moral blindness of a prudential policy in the service

of Christ. There are men who can never take other than an arithmetical view of things. They are the keen economists of the Church; they get near enough to Christ to ascertain the texture of His garments, and to calculate the value of His seamless vesture. There is a point of criticism here most singularly suggestive. The same word in the original is used to signify both waste and perdition; and if we connect this idea with another, we shall apprehend the idea I wish to present. "Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition;" and this very son of perdition was the man who, on another occasion, and probably on this, called a sacrifice "waste," and vehemently maintained the claims of the poor. There, then, is the startling fact before us, that the men who denominate other people's service "waste" are themselves the most likely to be cast away as the refuse of the universe.

III. The all-comprehending wisdom of the Saviour's judgment. (1) He shows His anxiety for the peace of all who attempt to serve Him. (2) He shows His sympathy with the poor. (3) He shows that every age brings its own opportunities for doing good.

IV. The assured immortality of goodness.

PARKER, *Hidden Springs*, p. 276; see also *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 194.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 6-13.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 156; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 141; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 300.

Chap. xxvi., ver. 13.—"Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

THERE can be no question but that in this action of Mary there was something deeply symbolical. I am not going to say that Mary meant it to be so. There may often be far more in our own actions than we imagine. Perhaps, though, her ardent love led her to do just the right thing at the right moment, and that is the highest wisdom. The act of Mary suggested to the mind of Christ the greater act He was about to perform; and in that pure offering of Mary's love He saw symbolised the greater offering He was about to make, prompted by a love infinitely deeper than hers. He saw the broken alabaster box; He noted the flowing ointment; He smelt the sweet savour that filled all the house, and He said, "This Gospel—the Gospel that is in figure here—this Gospel, wherever it is preached,

shall be linked with Mary's action, for there is a spiritual affinity between the two."

Note: I. The woman's sublime devotion; and she may serve as a model to all God's children in one or two respects. (1) She was completely under the sway of devoted love to Christ's Person. If you read the record you will see how Christ distinguished, all the way through, her personal attachment to Him. "She hath done a good work unto Me." In the mind of Christ devotion is the chiefest of Christian virtues. (2) Her devotion was both original and fearless. The disciples had only one idea for doing good. Charity was their hobby, and so the moment they saw Mary pouring out this ointment upon Christ, they began to count up the cost, and said, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" They were spiritually stereotyped in their mode of action. Love must always be original. Let a person only love, and he becomes a genius in manifesting it. (3) This manifestation was magnificent. The woman did not think simply how little she could give and yet maintain her character. It was, "What does my heart prompt?" Let us ask our souls this question, "My heart, hast thou ever done a magnificent thing for Christ? Hast thou ever known what it is to be, in the judgment of the world, extravagant for Him?

II. Christ's chivalrous championship of this woman. In espousing her cause He was espousing His own. Note the resemblance that exists between this woman's action and our Lord's action in a few hours after the incident—the resemblance that leads Him to say, "This Gospel." There is a resemblance: (1) In the motive; Christ knew that it was pure love which prompted this gift of consecration. He saw in this a symbol of the motive power of His own action. (2) Mary's work resembled His in its self-devotion. In the broken alabaster box He saw His own offering unto death, and therefore said, "Wheresoever *this Gospel* is preached."

A. G. Brown, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,085.

Christ anointed for His Burial.

I. There can be no doubt that the majority of Christians, if they candidly gave utterance to their sentiments, would express surprise at the high honour promised to Mary for so slight a service. What she did was unnecessary; it was of no utility; it could be in itself of no value to our Blessed Lord. If disproportion exist between the service of Mary in anointing

Him, and His commendation, the whole passage of Scripture must remain obscure. But is there such disproportion? We are prepared to argue that there is not; that light and trivial as the action seems of her so blessed, it contained in it enough to merit the gracious promise of remembrance which Christ enunciated. What is our ideal of a religious character? Is it not that a man should be uniformly upright, sober, just, and regular in his habits? The result is, that the temper of our religion is the reverse of enthusiastic. And from our national prejudices it arises that such narratives as that in which the text occurs, seem strange and hard to understand. The conduct of the woman who anointed our Lord was the result of an overflowing love, which mastered all her powers to suppress. He who measures every act of His creatures, not by its intrinsic value, but as it has Himself for its source, its object and its end, may, and it would seem does, rate the offering of the heart's deep love higher than all. It may have been to teach us this, that in the days of His sojourn below the Eternal Son bestowed praise so high upon Mary's simple act of love, and promised that wherever His Gospel should be preached that thing which she had done should be told for a memorial of her.

II. The woman in the text offers also an illustrious example of implicit faith. It is probable that she, like the disciples, had heard the Redeemer speak of His death. On the very day upon which the feast in the abode of Simon the leper took place, He had said to them, "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified." He made mention of His death, and her mind travelled at once to His entombment. She took the precious ointment, and anticipating in her love and faith those sorrowing women who, a few days later, came early to the sepulchre, she brake the box and poured it upon His head. She who anointed Him for His burial was the first who signified her assent to the mystery of His death, with a love that could not be restrained, and a faith that nothing could withstand.

J. R. Woodford, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 84.

References: xxvi. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 286; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., pp. 331, 333; W. M. Taylor, *Three Hundred Outlines from the New Testament*, p. 28. xxvi. 14-16.—C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons chiefly Practical*, p. 115. xxvi. 14-25.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 272. xxvi. 14-30.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 204. xxvi. 20.—F. W. Brown, *Christian World*

Pulpit, vol. xiii., p. 58. xxvi. 20-22.—J. R. Macduff, *Communion Memories*, p. 74. xxiv. 20-25.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 371.

Chap. xxvi., ver. 22.—"Lord, is it I?"

I. Look at the question, "Lord is it I?" in connection with the scene and the time when each disciple was shocked and startled into asking it. You have, perhaps, in the mirror of memory, the picture of a certain tranquil sunset. If in that moment, and without any premonitory sign, there had all at once burst out upon the tranquillity a peal of terrible thunder, you could not have been so startled as were the disciples when these words struck upon them. There never was a sunset like this, the sunset of the Sun of Righteousness. It was an hour of beautiful peace and farewell revelation, when out broke the thunderclap, "One of you shall betray Me." Never before had words filled souls with the shock of such an unspeakable surprise.

II. Look at this question in connection with the remark that called it forth: "The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born." Reading these predictive words in the light of what we find farther on, we know that they pointed to Judas.

III. Look at the question in connection with the simple, unsuspecting brotherliness it revealed in those to whom it was spoken. It might have been thought that instant suspicion would have fastened on Judas. His character had always been open to question. When, therefore, Christ's declaration was made, "One of you shall betray Me," it would not have been wonderful if such words as these had passed through various minds: "It is Judas—I always mistrusted that Judas—I never liked his grasp of the bag." No such thoughts were in open or secret circulation. With lips that were tremulous, and cheeks that were blanched, each one said, not "Lord, is it he?" but "Lord is it I?"

IV. Note the fear for himself shown by everyone who asked this question. Pitiless detectors of sin in others should begin at home.

V. Note the love that worketh in the heart of the questioner. Not one of them ever knew how much he loved his Lord, but this shock brought the love out.

VI. Note the answer to the question. Eleven times the question had been asked, for the scare was felt and the cry was uttered

by every man at the table. Then it was forced from Judas, who repeated it, and Jesus answered, "Thou hast said." You can read what is on the open page, Jesus can look through the lids of the book—read off the shut-in print. You can see the whited sepulchre, He can see the skeleton within. You can see the body, He can see the soul.

C. STANFORD, *Evening of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 36.

Chap. xxvi., vers. 22, 25 (with John xiii., ver. 25).—"And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto Him, Lord, is it I? ... Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I?"—"He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto Him, Lord, who is it?"

I. IN the first form of the question: "Is it I?" we have an example of that wholesome self-distrust, which a glimpse into the possibilities of evil that lie slumbering in all our hearts ought to teach every one of us. Every man is a mystery to himself. In every soul there lie, coiled and dormant, hybernating snakes—evils that a very slight rise in the temperature will wake up into poisonous activity. And let no man say, in foolish self-confidence, that any form of sin which his brother has ever committed is impossible to him. The identity of human nature is deeper than the diversity of temperament, and there are two or three considerations that should abate a man's confidence that anything which one man has done it is impossible that he should do. (1) All sins are at bottom but varying forms of one root—selfishness. (2) All sin is gregarious; is apt not only to slip from one form to another, but any evil is apt to draw another after it. (3) Any evil is possible to us seeing that all sin is but yielding to tendencies common to us all. (4) Men will gradually drop down to the level which before they began the descent, seemed to be impossible to them.

II. We have here an example of precisely the opposite sort, namely, of that fixed determination to do evil, which is unshaken by the clearest knowledge that it is evil. Judas heard his crime described in its own ugly reality, he heard his fate proclaimed by lips of absolute love and truth; and notwithstanding both he comes unmoved and "unshaken with his question." The dogged determination in the man that dares to see his evil stripped naked, and is not ashamed, is even more dreadful than the hypocrisy and sleek simulation of friendship in his face.

III. We have in the last question an example of the peaceful confidence that comes from communion with Jesus Christ. It

was not John's love to Christ, but Christ's love to John, that made his safety. He did not say, "I love thee so much that I cannot betray thee." For all our feelings and emotions are but variable, and to build confidence upon them is to build a heavy building upon quicksand; the very weight of it drives out the foundations. But he thought to himself—or he felt rather than he thought—that all about him lay the sweet, warm, rich atmosphere of his Master's love, and to a man that was encompassed by that, treachery was impossible.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, March 5th, 1885.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 24.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 269; E Mason, *A Pastor's Legacy*, p. 386.

Chap. xxvi., vers. 24, 25.

JUDAS rebuked by Christ.

I. It will give increased interest to the sayings of our Lord in the text if we suppose that they were uttered with a special reference to Judas, with the merciful design of warning him of the enormity of his projected crime, and thus, if it were yet possible, of withholding him from its commission. The Son of Man was about to go as it was written of Him—nothing was about to happen to Him which had not been distinctly prearranged. The part which Judas was about to take in the fearful tragedy was every jot as accurately defined in the Divine plan as if Judas had been simply a passive instrument in the Divine hand; but nevertheless, woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! And if the wretched Judas dreamt, as possibly he did, of its being a sort of apology for his treachery, that it was needful in order to the accomplishment of prophecy, it should have brought home to him an overwhelming conviction of the falsehood which he harboured that Christ could thus combine the certainty of His being betrayed, and the criminality of His betrayer.

II. Glance next at another delusion to which it is likely that Judas gave indulgence. This is the delusion as to the consequences, the punishment, of sin being overstated or exaggerated. It might have been that Judas could hardly persuade himself that a Being so beneficent as Christ, whom he had seen wearying Himself to bless even His enemies, whom he had beheld weeping bitter tears over the infidel Jerusalem, would ever wholly lay aside the graciousness of His nature, and avenge a wrong done by surrendering the doer to intense and interminable anguish. In all the range of Scripture there is not, perhaps, a passage

which sets itself so decisively against this delusion as the latter clause of our Saviour's address in the text. "It had been good for that man if he had not been born." Better, indeed, better never to have been born—never to have risen in the world, a being endowed with the magnificent but tremendous gift of immortality—if sin incur the surrendering of that immortality to a portion of fire and shame. The saying of our text roots up utterly the falsehood to which Judas and his followers are so ready to cling.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,866.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 26.—*Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 182; Durrant, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 277. xxvi 26, 27.—G. Calthrop, *Words to my Friends*, p. 177.

Chap. xxvi., vers. 26-8.—"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body," etc.

NOTICE:—I. When the Lord's Supper was first kept, and who kept it. As He was eating, Jesus took bread. He was eating unleavened bread and drinking wine at the Feast of the Passover in the city of Jerusalem. The Last Supper was first eaten at the Passover Supper of the Jews. It was first eaten by Jesus and His Twelve Apostles the night He was betrayed.

II. What did these words mean to those who first heard them? The Apostles did not know what they meant. Jesus was with them at the feast. They could see His body, touch it. His blood was not poured out. But they knew that He spoke no words in vain. The bread was a token from Him, they could but eat it as He bade them. The wine was a token from Him, they could but drink it as He bade them. But after His Resurrection the Apostles began to know a little what was meant by the words which were spoken at the feast. Then they understood that in the body of Jesus Christ God was united to men, men to God. Then they understood that His blood was poured out, not for a few disciples, but for all men in all lands. That blood was the seal of a new covenant between God and men that He would blot out their sins and give them a new life,—the life of Him who died unto sin once, over whom death has no more dominion.

III. To us the Lord's Supper is the assurance of the redemption and reconciliation which God has made for us, and all mankind, in the body of His Son. It is the assurance that we are very members incorporate in the body of His Son. It is

the assurance that He will give us His Spirit to enable us to do the good works which He has prepared for us to walk in. It is a better and higher feast to us than the Passover was to the Jews; a feast like that which tells us of a God who has broken our bonds asunder; a feast like that which tells us that He is the King over us; but a feast which is not limited to one people, but which is intended for all, because our Lord Jesus Christ is, as St. Paul says, the Head of every man, the Author and Giver of salvation and life to those who have been most tied and bound by the chains of sin and death.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons preached in Country Churches*, p. 277.

REFERENCE: xxvi. 26-8.—C. Molyneux, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 225. xxvi. 26-29.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 359.

Chap. xxvi., vers. 27, 28.—**"And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."**

I. THE Cup to us speaks of a Divine treaty or covenant. Ancient Israel had lived for nearly two thousand years under the charter of their national existence, which, as we read in the old Testament, was given on Sinai amidst thunderings and lightnings; and that covenant, or agreement, or treaty, on the part of God, was ratified by a solemn act, in which the blood of the sacrifice, divided into two portions, was sprinkled: one half upon the altar, and the other half, after their acceptance of the conditions and obligations of the covenant, on the people, who had pledged themselves to obedience. The new covenant, which Christ seals in His blood, is the charter, the better charter, under the conditions of which not a nation but the world may find a salvation which dwarfs all the deliverances of the past. The new covenant, in the exuberant fulness of its gracious purposes, is at once the completion and the antithesis of the ancient covenant with its precepts and its retribution.

II. This Cup speaks to us of the forgiveness of sins. One theory, and one theory only, as it seems to me, of the meaning of Christ's death, is possible if these words of my text ever dropped from Christ's lips, or if He ever instituted the rite to which they refer; He must have believed that His death was a sacrifice, without which the sins of the world were not forgiven, and by which forgiveness came to us all.

III. This Cup speaks likewise of a life infused. "The blood

is the life" says the physiology of the Hebrews. The blood is the life, and when men drink of that cup they symbolise the fact that Christ's own life and spirit are imparted to them that love Him. The very heart of Christ's gift to us is the gift of His own very life to be the life of our lives.

IV. And lastly, it speaks of a festal gladness. They who live on Christ, they who drink in of His Spirit, should be glad in all circumstances, they and they alone. We sit at a table, though it be in a wilderness, though it be in the presence of our enemies, where there ought to be joy and the voice of rejoicing. But beyond that, this Cup points onward to a future feast. At that solemn hour Jesus stayed His own heart with the vision of the perfected kingdom and the glad festival then. So this communion has a prophetic element in it, and links on with predictions and parables which speak of the marriage supper of the great King, and of the time when we shall sit at His table in His kingdom.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, Nov. 5th, 1885.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 28.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. xii., p. 49; A. Barry, *Sermons for Passiontide and Easter*, p. 89. xxvi. 29.—Spurgeon, *Three Hundred Outlines from the New Testament*, p. 29.

Chap. xxvi., ver. 30.—"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives."

THERE are many truths which present themselves to the mind, when it duly ponders the simple statement of the text.

I. The first of these truths is that our blessed Lord, by conforming to certain customs of the Jews in the eating of the Passover, gave His sanction to ceremonies which may not be able to plead a Divine institution. It was not only in the singing of psalms, but in many other particulars, such as the recumbent posture, and the drinking of wine, that the Jews had altered or added to the original practice; but our Saviour made no objection to the alteration or addition. He celebrated the Passover just as He found it then used to be celebrated, submitting, so to speak, to tradition and custom. Had our Lord been a leader, disposed to make ceremonies the occasion of schism, He might have armed Himself with very specious objections, and have urged that there were conscientious grounds for separating from the communion of the national Church. But we may justly conclude that our Lord proceeded on what (were it not for modern cavils) we might call a self-evident principle, that rites and ceremonies are not in themselves any

part of the public worship of God; they are nothing but circumstances and customs to be observed in conducting that worship, and may, therefore, be enacted and altered as shall seem best to the Church.

II. The singing of a hymn was apparently inappropriate to the circumstances of Christ and His Apostles. They were joyous hymns in which they joined. Praise is the best auxiliary to prayer; and he who most bears in mind what has been done for him by God, will be most emboldened to supplicate fresh gifts from above. We should recount God's mercies, we should call upon our souls and all that is within us to laud and magnify His Name, when summoned to face new trials and encounter fresh dangers. This is too much overlooked and neglected by Christians. They are more familiar with the earnest petition than with the grateful anthem. Like the captives in Babylon, they hang their harps upon the willows when they find themselves in a strange land; whereas, if they would sing one of the songs of Zion, it would not only remind them of home, but encourage them to ask assistance and expect deliverance. Look at Christ and His Apostles. Before they departed—the Redeemer to His terrible agony, the disciples to the dreaded separation—the last thing which they did was to join in the chanting of thankful psalms; it was not until they had sung an hymn, but then it was, that they went out into the Mount of Olives.

H. MELVILL, *Sermons on Less Prominent Facts*, vol. i., p. 71.

REFERENCE: xxvi. 30.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 205.

Chap. xxvi., ver. 33.—"Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men should be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended."

ENTHUSIASM and its Dangers.

I. One reason of St. Peter's confidence was that he did not realise the situation which was awaiting him. As yet he had had no experience of any trial of the kind, and he seems not to have had that kind of imagination which can anticipate the untried with any sort of accuracy. When he said, "Though all men should be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended," he had not thought out in detail what was meant by the contingency which he thus describes. He had never yet seen his Master deserted by His friends and disciples, and he really treats such an occurrence in his inward heart as utterly improbable. Had St. Peter placed clearly before his

mind what was meant by all men being offended at Christ, had he pictured to himself how matters would stand, when even St. James, even St. John, had forsaken the Divine Master, he would have shrunk from adding his concluding words. St. Peter's confidence, then, was first of all the confidence of inexperience, aided by lack of imagination. It is repeated again and again under our eyes, at the present day.

II. Closely allied to this general failure to realise an untried set of circumstances was St. Peter's insufficient sense, at this period of his life, of the possibly awful power of an entirely new form of temptation.

III. St. Peter's over-confidence would seem to have been due in part to his natural temperament and to his reliance on it.

IV. What, then, is the lesson which we should try to carry away from this one event in St. Peter's history. Not, assuredly, to think cheaply of moral or religious enthusiasm as such, but to measure well, if possible, our religious language, especially the language of fervour and devotion. When religious language outruns prudence or conviction, the general character is weakened.

H. P. LIDDON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 113.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 33.—J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 6th series, p. 30. xxvi. 33-35.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 393.

Chap. xxvi., ver. 34.—"Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow thou shalt deny Me thrice."

CHRISTIAN Recompense.

The case of Peter shows that there is a denial of Christ which may be forgiven, although there is a denial of Him which will not. There is a denial of Him which may be forgiven, if we turn to Him, as Peter did, in sincere and hearty repentance. Peter went out and wept bitterly. But the denial of Him, which seems to us a little thing and to require no earnest repentance, is, indeed, not far from being a betrayal of Him.

I. What is the difference between the sin of Peter and the sin of Judas? Let us see what was the difference of their general lives. We know that Peter loved our Lord sincerely, and that he followed Him with a real desire to do His will, whereas what we know of Judas, even before His great sin, is unfavourable. It is of importance to observe this, because, in fact, our particular sins take their colour from the general character of

our lives. What we call sin of infirmity, a sudden yielding to some very strong temptation, can hardly be said to exist in a man whose life is generally careless or sinful. He who takes no heed at any time to strengthen his nature has no right to plead its weakness; he who is the slave of all common temptations has no right to say that this one temptation overcame him because of its greatness.

II. Yet the acts of Peter and of Judas were in themselves different. The act of Peter was done without premeditation. Assuredly had he felt himself in any danger of denying his Lord, he would have gone away to his own home rather than have sought admission to the palace of the high priest. But Judas's sin was deliberate; it had been resolved upon, not some minutes only before it was committed, but some hours, and even some days.

III. And so after the two sins were committed, what followed in either case? One look at our Lord recalled Peter to himself, to that very self, that better and habitual self, which our Lord had pronounced to be clean. He went out and wept bitterly. But of all this in the case of Judas we hear nothing: with him there was remorse indeed, but not repentance—an unblessed sorrow, working an unblessed death.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 98.

Chap. xxvi., ver. 36.—"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane."

THE Conflict in Gethsemane.

I. The place of the conflict calls for a brief notice. Gethsemane is now only a name for one of the booths in Vanity Fair. There are two rival Gethsemanes, and rival guides wrangle about the truth of this and that local identification. One place, called the true Gethsemane, is walled round by the Latins. Another, a little more to the north, is walled round by the Greeks; both enclosures being under lock and key. The New Testament lends no help to enquiries that have reference to sanctity of places.

II. The story of this conflict. (1) Its intensity is the first fact in the story that strikes us. (2) This awful inward conflict was in a scene of outward peace. (3) The conflict wrung from the Saviour a great cry: "O, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." We have a glimpse here of the conflict carried on

by Christ for us, *single-handed.* (4) We see that under all the sorrows of the Man of Sorrows, in this night of conflict, there was tender personal thought about His disciples.

III. The sleep of the disciples while this conflict was going on. While the Lord's great cry rang they were dropping asleep. On three occasions He came back from His own terrible post, that He might see how they were faring at theirs, and on these occasions He found them asleep. "Couldest not thou watch one hour?" He had only asked Peter and his associates to watch. As a true man, He longed to have at least their sympathy, though He would not have their co-operative work. In your measure you know the feeling. "The spirit, indeed, is willing; but the flesh is weak." There was tender remonstrance, but not severe reproof. The sleep of the disciples has been cited as a sign of indifference; but it was treated by Jesus only as a symptom of mortality. In the case of excessive sorrow and care, the immense fatigue demands the enormous sleep. There is no master so merciful as He, no friend who makes such allowances. This quick apology of love for weakness is set on record for all who need it; and we, ashamed of our slumbers, and alarmed at our deadness of soul to things tremendous, may sometimes be kept from despondency by these words of Christ—golden words to be hidden in our most sacred treasury.

C. STANFORD, *Evening of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 171.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 36.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 693; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 199; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 215.

Chap. xxvi., vers. 36-46.

GETHSEMANE.

I. The first thing to which we direct attention, is the intense severity of the suffering which now overwhelmed and oppressed the mind of Christ. The extreme severity of Christ's sufferings in the garden are indicated by several circumstances. (1) It appears that as soon as He had retired with the three disciples who were permitted to be near Him, the internal conflict commenced, and a sudden change took place in His appearance. "He began to be sorrowful and very heavy." There was a complete prostration of the bodily powers; a suspension or deprivation, so to speak, of nervous energy. His internal strength seemed to fail and forsake Him, and He appeared in danger of passively yielding to the onset of sorrow, as if it

were hopeless to bear up against it. (2) The next particular that shows the severity of His suffering, is the language in which He Himself describes it, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." (3) The crushing and agonising nature of our Lord's sufferings may be seen in His earnest appeal to His three friends: "Tarry ye here, and watch with Me." (4) There appeared an angel from heaven, strengthening Him. But this shows to what a mysterious condition of weakness He was reduced. Physically and mentally He was brought very low, and needed to have His anguish assuaged, His courage recalled, and His frame supported, by one from heaven.

II. The seat of our Lord's suffering was the soul. The Scriptures seem to refer to three sources of this distress and anguish. (1) There was some mysterious conflict with the great adversary of God and man. (2) There was some mysterious infliction direct from the hand of God, some wonderful withdrawal of His countenance and complacency, or, at least, of their sensible manifestation. (3) Our iniquities were laid upon Him, and He bore the curse and penalty of transgression.

III. Note the conduct of Jesus under His mysterious trial. He was sorrowful, amazed, and very heavy; but He roused Himself to pray, and was heard in that He feared. He was not literally delivered from death, nor from those deadly mental pangs, so much worse than the cross itself; but He was saved from sinking under them, He was strengthened by an angel sent to Him from the Father, and was thus enabled to bear up until the darkness had passed away.

T. BINNEY, *King's Weigh-house Chapel Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 150.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 36-41.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 469. xxvi. 36-46.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. xv., p. 70; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 325. xxvi. 36-50.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 275.

Chap. xxvi., ver. 38.—**Jesus said "unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me."**

THE Valley of the Shadow of Death.

I. Whether death be easy or painful, it is appointed unto all men once to die. This everyone knows, so that each person thinks that he can gain nothing by hearing it repeated. But I imagine, that although we know that we shall die, yet we who move about in health and strength have a very faint and imperfect notion of what death is. Indeed, it is not more concealed from our spirit than it is shut out from our minds. It would be vain

to say that we can by any means escape all its bitterness, most certainly we cannot; but we *can* make this bitterness only a brief suffering of a few days or weeks, instead of the beginning of a miserable eternity. This we may gain, with God's blessing, by thinking seriously and frequently upon it.

II. It becomes us to accustom ourselves to consider death as something real, to make it a part of every day's serious thoughts; to bring steadily before our eyes the possibility that before the day closes which has now begun, it may be near, even at the doors. Will it be said that such thoughts would unfit us for our common business, or, at least, would stop all cheerfulness, and mark our countenances with a perpetual expression of gloom? Then we must still be in bondage to the weak and beggarly elements; we must be ignorant of the liberty which Christ has given us; or else our mirth and pleasure, and our business, must be such as Christ would condemn, and, in that case, we must, at whatever cost, get rid of them. For most certainly that is no fit employment and no Christian relaxation, in which we should be afraid to die; but either it is wrong in itself, or it takes us too much time, or it encourages us in a spirit of sloth, or pride, or carelessness. If it does none of these, and if it be pursued with thankfulness, as the gift of God, then the thought of death need not disturb or sadden it; we may go to it without scruple from our most solemn thoughts and prayers; and we may be called from it without fear if such be the will of God in the pangs of the most sudden death.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 85.

CHRIST'S Agony in the Garden.

I. It was in the soul rather than in the body that our blessed Saviour made atonement for transgression. He had put Himself in the place of the criminal, so far as it was possible for an innocent man to assume the position of the guilty; and standing in the place of the criminal with guilt imputed to Him, He had to bear the punishment that misdeeds had incurred. You must be aware that anguish of the soul more than of the body is the everlasting portion which is to be awarded to sinners, and we might well expect that our Lord's external affliction, however vast and accumulated, would be comparatively less in its rigour or accompaniments than His internal anguish, which is not to be measured or imagined. This expectation is quite borne out by the statements of Scripture, if carefully considered. Was it the mere thought of dying as a malefactor which so overcame

the Redeemer that He needed strengthening by an angel from heaven? Was it this that wrung from Him the thrilling exclamation, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful?" Though we cannot explain what passed in the soul of the Redeemer, we would impress on you the truth, that it was in the soul rather than in the body that those dire pangs were endured which exhausted the curse denounced against sin.

II. It gives a preciousness to every means of grace, to consider it as brought into being by the agonies of the Redeemer. It would go far, were this borne in mind, to defend it against resistance or neglect if it were impressed on you that there is not a single blessing of which you are partakers that did not spring from this sorrow—this sorrow unto death—of the Redeemer's soul. Neither is it the worth only of the means of grace that we may learn from the mighty sorrow by which they were purchased; it is also our own worth, the worth of our own soul. If you read the form of the question, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" you will see it implies that it is not within the empire of wealth to purchase the soul. But cannot this assume the form of another question—What would God give in exchange for the soul? Here we have an answer, not of supposition, but of fact; we tell you what God has given, He has given Himself. Wonderful as it may be, the human soul is worth the incalculable price which was paid for its ransom.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,501.

REFERENCE: xxvi. 38.—W. Gresley, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 189.

Chap. xxvi., vers. 38-40.

DIVINE SORROW.

It is not on the actual physical sufferings of the Crucifixion that the Bible most invites us to dwell—it relates them, but it passes over them as lightly as the circumstances will admit—but on the inner suffering, on the inner intentions of the scene, we are invited to rest; and it is this inner intention which it expresses in the garden of Gethsemane.

I. Consider what were the causes which wrung from the Redeemer this strong crying and tears, the intolerable anguish of that hour among the sacred olive-trees, on the eve of the first Good Friday. (1) First, that gloom may have been the sense of the near approach of death with all the dread misgivings which beset the spirit in that supreme hour. (2) Or, again, it may have been the sense of loneliness—of the ingratitude, the desertion,

the failure of disciples and kinsmen and country. (3) Or, yet again, it may have been something deeper, the sense of the load of human wretchedness entering into his soul, so as almost to take possession of it, so that, in the strong language of St. Paul, "He who knew no sin was made sin for us."

II. Let us remember that this scene is the silent, but most significant, protestation against the misery of wrong-doing, against the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Let us remember it alsc as the memorial that if we are oppressed by trials, which seem to us too hard to bear, we are but sharing the destiny of the well-beloved Son in whom God is well pleased. The scene suggests also how and in what spirit we ought to pray. There is something nobler and higher in the efficacy and the answer of prayer than the mere demanding and receiving the special blessings for which we ask. We are, indeed, by this narrative encouraged to lay all our wants before our Father, to cast all our cares upon Him, to beseech Him that He will hear us in small things as in great. We may pray, even as our Saviour prayed, that if it be possible the cup of our trial may pass from us; but if no direct answer be given, if the cup does not pass from us, let not our faith be shaken; let us look at the history of our Saviour's agony.

A. P. STANLEY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 344.

Chap. xxvi., ver. 39.—"Not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

THE Will of God the Cure of Self-will.

It was the deep disease of self-will to cure which our good Lord came, in our nature, to fulfil the Father's will, to suffer what the Father willed, to "empty Himself and become obedient unto death." Since pride was the chief source of disease in our corrupted wills, to heal this the Eternal Son of God came as now from His everlasting glory, and as a little child fulfilled His Father's will. So He teaches us how to learn that will; by filial obedience; by willing suffering; and so at last by active doing of the will of God. We unlearn self-will by receiving all patiently which crosses self.

I. It is not against the will of God even strongly to will if it should be His will, what yet may prove not to be His will. Entire submission to the will of God requireth absolutely these two things: wholly will whatsoever thou knowest God to will; wholly reject whatsoever thou knowest God willeth not. Beyond these two, while the will of God is as yet not clear unto thee, thou art free.

II. Nor again is it against the will of God that thou art bowed down and grieved by what is the will of God. How can we but weep and have sorrow of heart when, if it be, for our own sins and the sins of our people, the Ark, the Church of God, is sorely stricken, and the hearts of men are perplexed and the work of God is hindered? And even when the heaviness is for our own griefs, yet, if it be patient, it too is according to the will of God. For had we not grief we should not have suffering, and without suffering there were no healing.

III. Whatever thy grief or trouble be, take every drop in thy cup from the hand of Almighty God. Thou knowest well that all comes from God, ordered or overruled by Him.

IV. Again, no trouble is too small wherein to see the will of God for thee. Great troubles come but seldom. Daily fretting trials—that is, what of thyself would fret thee—may often, in God's hands, conform thee more to His gracious will. They are the daily touches whereby He traces on thee the likeness of His Divine will. There is nothing too slight wherein to practise oneness with the will of God. "Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." So hath our Lord sanctified all the natural shrinkings of our lower will. He vouchsafed to allow the natural will of His sacred manhood to be amazed and very heavy at the mysterious sufferings of the Cross, to hallow the "mute shrinking" of ours, and guide us on to the all-holy submission of His will. It is a great word which He lets us take into our mouths, "Not what I, but what Thou." *I* and *Thou* stand, as it were, over against each other. *I*, this worm of the earth, yet endowed with what even God will not break, this fearful gift, the will; *Thou*, the fountain of love, of wisdom, overflowing goodness. Give but thy will to God, and *I* and *Thou* become one. Choose but the will of God, and thou willest with His wisdom, thou choosest with His all-perfect choice, thou enterest into His councils, thou lovest with His love.

E. B. PUSEY, *Sermons for the Church's Seasons*, p. 67.

I. "I WILL" is the most sublime phrase that man is capable of uttering. In that one short expression is contained the true secret of his highest greatness. The will which man possesses is not only the reflection of the Divine image within him, but it is also the essential expression of his personality or real self.

II. For what purpose was this stupendous gift given us? What is the true use to which God would have us turn it? To this question only one answer is possible. God, almighty and

self-existent from eternity before all worlds, could only out of pure love have created all things to reflect Himself in them, could only have created man for His own glory. "The Lord hath made all things for Himself." And so when God made man in His own image, He did not wish to make a mere machine, but He gave him the Divine gift of free will, that man might be able to choose God for himself. That, then, was the purpose for which will was given to man,—that man might freely give it back to God. As then the powerful will is the reflection of God's image, so the act of willing should be the reflection of God's will. As face answereth to face in the glass, so should the will of man be in complete correspondence with the will of God.

III. How is it then, we may ask with wonder, that the experience of mankind is so different? How is it that the will of man is not subject to the will of God? It is because there exists a counteracting force. The will implies a struggle and a mystery, a deliberately setting before us two courses, and a choice of one. A choice, then, lies before us between God's will and all that is opposed to God's will. To make the right choice is the struggle that God requires from each of us. Here, then, is the most important question we can put to ourselves: Am I choosing God, or that which is opposed to God? This is the test question by which we must try every action of our lives. Have I obtained that complete self-mastery, which enables me to dedicate all the actions of my life to God's glory? The key to self-mastery is self-knowledge; and the way to self-knowledge is self-examination.

W. BAKER, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 707.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 39.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 292; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 82; W. Baker, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 35; G. Dawson, *Sermons on Disputed Points*, p. 129.

Chap. xxvi., vers. 39, 42.—"O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me. . . . O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done."

SUBMISSION a Progress.

To enter fully into the mystery of Christ's agony is not given to the living. But even the faint distant glimpse which we catch of it causes to rise upon this life of ours a marvellous light. The mourner has felt it so, and the sinner has felt it so, and the tempted has felt it so, and the disconsolate and solitary man has felt it so, and the dying man has felt it so. Consider

the example, the model, the type of suffering, which is here set before us in Christ.

I. All sorrow, all suffering, even if it be anguish, even if it be agony, is a cup. It is something definite—something of a certain size, measure, and capacity—something which may be compared to the contents of a vessel; and that vessel prepared, presented, administered, by the hand of God Himself.

II. Again, concerning the cup itself, you may pray. Though it is of God's sending, yet He will be inquired of, He will be applied to, He will be entreated, concerning it. If ever there was a cup which could not be prayed against, it was the cup of the sinbearing. And yet Christ prayed even against it.

III. But how pray? In what spirit, Christ being still our Teacher? (1) As to a Father. "O My Father." Never is a childlike spirit so needful as in regard to suffering, and in regard to prayer concerning it. (2) Again, with an "if." If it be possible. Then it may not be possible that the cup should pass. And you must recognise this possible impossibility. (3) Once more, with an earnest confession of the comparative value of two wills—your will and God's. If the two clash, have you made up your mind to wish, cost what it may, that God's should prevail?

Our Lord's second prayer asks not at all for the removal of the cup. The first was prayer with submission; the second is submission without even prayer. There was progression, even in this solemn hour, in the discipline of the Saviour's obedience. He was learning obedience. Beyond the submission of the will lies the silence of the will; beyond the desire to have only of God's will the desire that God only may will, whether I have or have not. The first prayer, the former text, was the one; the second prayer, the latter text, was the other. All of us have wishes, have desires. How shall these pass into our entire good, into our final perfection? (1) We must turn them into prayers; (2) we must pray in the spirit of submission.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Last Words at Doncaster*, p. 165.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 39, 42.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 283. xxvi 40.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 20; —*Ibid.*, *Plymouth Pulpit Sermons*, 5th series, p. 187.

Chap. xxvi., vers. 40, 41.—"What, could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

I. How gently, yet how earnestly, does Christ call upon us to watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. To watch

and to pray; for of all those around Him some were sleeping and none were praying; so that they who watched were not watching with Him, but against Him. In our careless state of mind the call to us is to watch; in our over-busy state the call is to us to pray; in our hard state there is equal need for both. And even in our best moods, when we are at once sober and earnest and gentle, then not least does Christ call upon us to watch and to pray, that we may retain that than which else no gleam of April sunshine was ever more fleeting; that we may perfect that which else is of the earth earthy, and when we lie down in the dust will wither and come to dust, too.

II. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." How great is the lovingkindness of these words! how gently does Christ bear with the weakness of His disciples! But this thought may be the most blessed or the most dangerous thought in the world: the most blessed if it touches us with love, the most dangerous if it emboldens us in sin. There may be some here who may go on grieving Christ and crucifying Him afresh for as much as seventy years; and He will bear with them all that time, and His sun will daily shine upon them, and His creatures and His word will minister to their pleasure, and He Himself will say nothing to them, but to entreat them to turn and be saved. But as these years pass on Christ will still spare us, but His voice of entreaty will be less often heard; the distance between Him and us will be consciously wider. From one place after another, where we once used sometimes to see Him, He will have departed; year after year some object which used once to catch the light from heaven will have become overgrown, and will lie constantly in gloom; year after year the world will become to us more entirely devoid of God. The increased weakness of our flesh has destroyed all the power of our spirit, and almost all its willingness; it is bound with chains which it cannot break, and indeed scarcely desires to break.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 174.

THESE words of our Lord in the garden, when He came from His agony and found the Apostles asleep, are very sorrowful and touching. They show an ineffable depth of tenderness and compassion. He made the disciples' defence for them; His very warning taught them how to plead with Him; and by teaching it He acknowledged the truth of the plea "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak!" Let us consider these words.

I. By the "spirit" is to be understood what we call the heart or will, illuminated by the grace of God; by the "flesh" is to be understood our fallen manhood, with its affections and lusts, so far as they still remain even in the regenerate. (1) We may trace the weakness of our nature in the great fluctuations of our inner state. (2) We may take as another example of this weakness the speedy fading away of good impressions even in those that live lives of real devotion. (3) This same weakness which besets our imperfect nature, is the reason why we fall so far short, in effect, of our aims and resolutions; and, in a word, of the whole law and measure of obedience.

II. Do not be out of heart at the ever-present consciousness of the weakness of your moral nature. It is well known, and better understood, and more closely scanned by Him to whose perfection you are mystically united. It is the very condition of the regenerate, and the law which governs the knitting together of His mystical body, and the educing of a new creation out of the old, that it should be gradual; imperfection passing into perfection, death being slowly swallowed up of life, sin through long striving cast forth by holiness. Moreover, we know not what mysterious purpose in the spiritual world may be fulfilled even in our weakness; how the glory of the Son of God, and the abasement of sin, may be perfected in our infirmity. And once more, as there seems to be some great purpose in the permission of our weakness, so does there also appear to be as deep a design in permitting the infirmities of the saints to cleave so long and closely about them. We must be made partakers of the humiliation of Christ, and therefore we are left girded with the burden of our fallen nature. It is by learning the depth of our fall and of the evil that dwells in us that we are to be fully abased. Our weakness and faults are left to abide in us that we may learn the perfection of hating what God abhors. They are as a purifying fire, which eats through us with a sleepless pain, and an anguish which cleanses the soul. Our soils and our sins lie so deep, they must needs be long in the refiner's fire. Pray rather that, if need be, you may be tried seven times, so that all may be clean purged out.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 223.

IN the precept, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation," there is enjoined a feeling of apprehension and alarm. It is equivalent to saying, "Do not suffer yourself to be at ease." Beware of quietly enjoying your life. You are lost if you live

without fear. As to moral and spiritual dangers, the greater number seem to have determined to indulge in a careless and almost unlimited confidence. As a natural consequence, they are overrun and spoiled and ruined by what they so little dread and guard against—that is to say, by temptations.

I. "That ye enter not into temptation." The words seem to say very pointedly: Beware of the beginning, for it is in fatal connection with the next ensuing, and yet connects what is behind. And since temptation is sure to be early with its beginnings, so too should watching and praying; early in life; early in the day; early in every undertaking. "Enter not"—that is, that we be cautious of venturing into anything which we have reason to believe or suspect may soon become temptation. It may be fair and harmless at the outset; but how far on? "Enter not"—that is, that we be considerate how a thing may become temptation. This demands an exercise of discerning foresight.

II. "That ye enter not"—that is, that we may be quickly alarmed at the indications that a thing is becoming temptation. "Here a questionable effect is beginning upon me; nay, but it is a bad effect. Certain principles of truth and duty are beginning to slacken their hold on me." Beware of becoming so partial to a thing that this circumstance shall become a trifling matter. You may have seen such examples; uneasiness has been felt for a while; there may have been a questioning whether to relinquish the object; but the heart grew faster to it. Be cautious of pursuing an evident good in a way in which there must be temptation. Be specially fearful of that where, if there be good to be obtained, the good is to come afterwards, but the temptation first. If the temptation coming first shall blind my discernment of the good—cool my zeal or destroy my relish of it—I should stop with the temptation and abandon the good. Beware of the kind of companionship that directly leads into temptation. But let no man be beguiled to think that he is safe against temptations at the times when his only companion is himself. The whole tempting world may then come to him through the medium of the imagination. The great deep of his own evil heart may be broken up. In this solitude may come that tempter that came to our Lord in the desert. In truth, unhappily there is no situation or employment in which temptation is not to be apprehended.

J. FOSTER, *Lectures*, vol. i., p. 42.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 41.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 418;

J. H. Thom, *Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ*, p. 114; F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 60; J. Pott, *A Course of Sermons for the Lord's Day*, vol. i., p. 346. xxvi. 42.—H. Allon, *Three Hundred Outlines from the New Testament*, p. 30.

Chap. xxvi., ver. 45.—"Sleep on now, and take your rest."

Too Late.

In these words our Lord means: "It is too late. The opportunity is lost and gone. The time for watching and praying is over; you have let it escape you. You may as well sleep now. Alas! there is now nothing to be done; you must now enter, as you may, into temptation." If this be the true account of the words as first spoken, we shall readily think of ways in which they come home to us.

I. They have a direct bearing upon the whole subject of temptation. Christ, who loves us, bids us watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. This, beforehand. The traitor was not yet in sight with his band and his weapons. The high priest's servants, who were to be the human tempters, were themselves sleeping unconscious. This is the time for watching and praying—before the temptation comes. Mark that well. It is the moral of the whole. Remember there is a prayer which comes too late; there is a prayer which even contradicts itself in the asking; there is a prayer which asks to be kept safe under the temptation which we are going in quest of.

II. "Sleep on now, and take your rest." The words have a meaning also as respects opportunity. God gives us all a multitude of opportunities, and with respect to all He says to us, "Watch and pray;" "Occupy till I come." We will not, we never see, never feel the sacred aspect of these things. Each opportunity as it is towards God, is also, as towards man, a possibility of selfishness. There is not a relation in which we stand one to another, which may not be taken as a selfishness and refused as an opportunity. One by one, these are withdrawn. He who once said, "Watch and pray," says at last, "Sleep on now, and take your rest."

III. This saying, which is so true and so solemn as to the several opportunities which God here gives us, is not less so in its bearing upon that total sum of all opportunities which is the life. When Christ at last comes, and finds us still sleeping; then He is compelled to say—else He could be trifled with, else He were not the Judge, He were not the Faithful One and the True—He is compelled to say, "Sleep on now, and take your

rest." The time is gone by. "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Lessons of the Cross and Passion*, p. 1.

Chap. xxvi., vers. 45, 46.—"Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray Me."

THE Parabolical Language of Christ.

I. Our Lord's habitual language was parabolical. I use the word in a wide sense, to include all language which is not meant to be taken according to the letter. This seems to have been, if I may venture to say so, the favourite language in which He preferred to speak; but when He found that He was not understood, then, according to the nature of the case, He went on in two or three different manners. (1) When He saw that the misunderstanding was wilful, He made His language more and more figurative. (2) When He found not a disposition but yet a profound ignorance of His meaning He broke off the conversation, and adopted another method of instruction. (3) When He was speaking to His own disciples, to whom it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, He generally explained His meaning—at least so far as to prevent practical error when He found that they had not understood Him.

II. Note the general lesson conveyed by our Lord's words in the text. How truly do we deserve the reproof; how thankfully may we accept the call! Are we to take the words of reproof literally? May we really sleep on and take our rest? Oh, vain and wilful folly, so misunderstood! But lest we should misunderstand, let us hear our Lord's next words: "Rise, let us be going," and that instantly; the time and opportunity already lost is far more than enough. Rise, let us be going," so Christ calls us; for He has still other work for us to do, for Him and with Him. The future is yet our own, though the past be lost. There will be a time when we might strike out the words, "Rise, let us be going," they will concern us then no more. It is only said, "Sleep on now, and take your rest;" all your watching time is wasted, and you can now watch no more; there remains only to sleep that last sleep, from which we shall then never wake to God and happiness, but in which we shall be awake for ever to sin and misery.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 266.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 47-55.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 226.

Chap. xxvi., ver. 50.—"And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come?"

THE Last Pleading of Love.

Note: I. The patience of Christ's love. If we take no higher view of this most pathetic incident than that the words come from a man's lips, even then all its beauty will not be lost. There are some sins against friendship, in which the manner is harder to bear than the substance of the evil. It must have been a strangely mean and dastardly nature, as well as a coarse and cold one, that could think of fixing on the kiss of affection as the concerted sign to point out their victim to the legionaries. Many a man who could have planned and executed the treason would have shrunk from that. But what a picture of perfect patience and unruffled calm we have here, in that the answer to the poisonous, hypocritical embrace was these moving words. Surely if there ever was a man who might have been supposed to be excluded from the love of God, it was this man. Surely if ever there was a moment in a human life when one might have been supposed that ever open heart would shut itself together against anyone, it was this moment. But no, the betrayer in the very instant of his treason has that changeless tenderness lingering around him, and that merciful hand beckoning to him still.

II. The pleading of Christ's patient love. There is an appeal to the traitor's heart, and an appeal to his conscience. Christ would have him think of the relations that have so long subsisted between them, and He would have him think too of the real nature of the deed he is doing, or perhaps of the motives that impel him. The grave, sad word by which He addresses him is meant to smite upon his heart. The sharp question which He puts to him is meant to wake up his conscience; and both taken together represent the two chief classes of remonstrance which He brings to bear upon us all—the two great batteries from which He assails the fortress of our sins.

III. The possible rejection of Christ's patient love. (1) Even that appeal was vain. Man can frustrate the counsel of God. (2) Judas held his peace—no more. There was no need for him to break out with oaths and curses—to reject his Lord with wild words. Silence was sufficient. And for us no more is required. (3) The appeal of Christ's love hardens where it does not soften. That gentle voice drove the traitor nearer the verge over which he fell into a gulf of despair.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons preached in Manchester*, 3rd series, p. 305.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 52.—W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*,

vol. ii., p. 241; S. Macnaughton, *Real Religion and Real Life*, p. 134. xxvi. 55, 56.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 469. xxvi. 56.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 127; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 87.

Chap. xxvi., ver. 56.

THE Fickleness of Friends.

I. "Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled." The cruelty of all this it would be hard to exaggerate. For three years and upwards their Divine Master had been building up their faith and binding them to Himself by a thousand heavenly arts. They had witnessed His miracles; they had heard His discourses; they had experienced His favours; they had been made the objects of His priceless love. Behold, the end is at last approaching—the end of life. The extremity of suffering and the severest brunt of the conflict with the unseen world is even now at hand. He has washed their feet; He has made them partakers of His body and of His blood; He has prepared them for danger: more than that, He has made them privy to His own mysterious need of support and consolation, even of their human sympathy; He has exposed to them His secret sense of loneliness and desertion: "What, could ye not watch with Me *one* hour?" I have no wish to exaggerate the faithlessness of the eleven Apostles, or to detract from the severity of their trial. Our wisdom is rather to behold in their conduct an image of what would assuredly have been our own, had we been there. We are spectators, not judges; and we should be silent and sorrowful, if we would profit by what we are permitted to see of the transactions of the last night in the earthly life of the Son of Man.

II. A lesson of patience towards one another. A lesson of kindness and forbearance and long-suffering towards those whom we call our friends. This is the teaching of the incident we are now considering. We claim so much; any token of wavering constancy, any want of faithfulness to ourselves in our hour of need—how prone we are to revenge it with coldness, and rebuke, and indignant displeasure! It is often the sign of a warm and faithful spirit which cannot brook in another what it especially would shrink from being guilty of itself. But, however we may explain it—however palliate the offence—an offence it is, and an offence against the Spirit of Him whom we serve, and whose holy name is called upon us. Let us be more patient, more long-suffering and less ready to take offence and rail against the world and its ways; re-

membering that thou hast bound no one on the earth's surface to thee—nor canst bind—as Christ bound the eleven, who, when they beheld Him apprehended in the garden, at once forsook Him and fled.

J. W. BURGON, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, No. 38.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 30-4.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. ii., p. 132. xxvi. 31, 32.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 242. xxvi. 31-46.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 215.

Chap. xxvi., vers. 57, 58, 69-75.

PETER'S Denial of Jesus.

Although Peter's denial of his Lord shocked all witnesses as a sudden, unaccountable, disconnected thing, it was in reality but the last act in a succession of acts, one growing out of another.

I. Think of this deed in connection with a certain weakness in which it began. Who denied the Lord? Was it that supreme scoundrel, Judas? No—infinitely pathetic tale to tell!—it was Peter! There was nothing artful, nothing subtle, nothing indirect, nothing mean in that man. Look at him. His very eyes tell the truth, his very blunders show his honesty; yet it was he who told the lie. Peter had many strong points, but one weak one; and that one, undetected by himself, was at the beginning of this disaster. It was the weakness of excessive constitutional impulsiveness. Impulse is beautiful and good, but impulse is only like steam in the works of a factory, or wind in the sails of a yacht. Impulse is a good servant of the soul, but a bad master.

II. Think of this act of Peter in connection with his entrance into the temptation to commit such an act. "Enter not into temptation," said the Lord, but Peter seems to have heard what was expressly meant for him without a ripple of emotion, or a rising of alarm. He could depend on his own self-protective instinct. Peter thought himself an iron man; but there was a flaw in his iron, though he knew it not until he had entered into a trial for which he was not fitted; then the iron broke.

III. Think of Peter's denial of Christ in connection with its three occasions. As is often the case with a man whose life has been passed in the country, when off his guard he talked in his broadest native dialect, so that all knew the poor chatterer to be from Galilee. A young saucy face turned on him suddenly, and its owner said, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee." Impulse has no dominion over the critical instances of life;

impulse prompted his first lie; in his terror, and before he was aware, Peter said, "Woman, I know Him not."

IV. Think of Peter's denial in connection with the treatment that Christ was receiving at the time. Just in the anguish of the Master's trial was the culmination of the servant's sin.

V. Think of Peter's denial of Christ in connection with Christ's act of restoring love. He turned upon Peter with a look. The curse only drew forth love, and the love went out with that look—so melting, so mournful, so pathetically expressive. We may not imagine what this look was like, but we know what effect it had upon the disciple. He flung himself out into the night. In anguish almost unendurable, in a torture of tenderness, and with love wrought into a storm of passionate remorse, he felt himself to be lost. Some structures can only be saved by being ruined. The Athenian said, "I should have been lost, if I had not been lost." With what deep meaning and mighty emphasis might the glorified Peter now say the same.

C. STANFORD, *The Evening of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 237.

REFERENCE: xxvi. 57.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 292.

Chap. xxvi., ver. 58.—"And sat with the servants, to see the end."

"To See the End!" It is one of those natural expressions which make the Bible so human. It is what we all have said—all felt—a hundred times.

I. Like the rest of the disciples, Peter no sooner saw the capture of the Lord than he forsook Him and fled. He has scarcely fled when he turns to follow—but he follows afar off, as one who would disguise even while he yields to the impulse. In the very midst of the high priest's servants, he seats himself, hoping by the parade of confidence to disarm suspicion. But he had miscalculated his own powers. He was too good a man to be a good actor. The part was overplayed. He had rushed into unnecessary danger, and he could neither tell the truth bravely, nor utter a falsehood quietly. He had come to see the end, and yet that natural impulse was dangerous for him. It had temptation in it. It brought him to the edge of that fall which might have been his ruin. But for that determination to see the end, Peter might have been as Matthew, might have been as Andrew, almost as Thomas—doubter, not denier; if deserter, yet not rebel. It was the sight of Christ on His trial, which gave possibility to the blasphemy: "I know not the man."

II. There is responsibility in seeing the end, to us, as well as for Peter. It is possible so to see as to see not for the better

but for the worse. This is so, when we either contemplate the cross carelessly, or turn its very grace into a licence for sin. It is possible—who shall gainsay it?—to make Christ crucified (as St. Paul expresses it) the minister of sin, to say, or to live as though saying, "Saved by grace; let me continue in sin that grace may abound." Thus we give occasion to the enemy to blaspheme, and take out of the salt of grace its whole savour of blessing. The preaching of the cross is no power, unless it sanctifies; it is no power, unless it saves from sin. The end is also a beginning; the death is also a life.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Temple Sermons*, p. 353.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 58.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, 2nd series, No. 10; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 220; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvi., p. 138.

Chap xxvi., ver. 63.—"But Jesus held His peace."

WHEN our Lord was upon earth, the measure of the fulness of His revelation to men was conditioned by their disposition towards Himself, and by their general moral character. This explains His silence to Caiaphas, to Herod, and to Pilate. In like manner the Scriptures are silent to some and full of heavenly wisdom for others. That which a man will get out of the Bible depends on what he brings to the Bible. The eye can see only what it brings with it the power of seeing.

I. Prejudice, whatever be its source, gets nothing out of the Scriptures. If you bring a full pitcher to a spring you can get nothing from that spring.

II. Habitual indulgence in sin will also prevent us from getting any answer to our inquiries from Scripture. Hardened sinners find nothing good in the Bible, because their moral sense is so hardened that they do not know good when they see it. The Herods of to-day get no answer from Christ.

III. The influence of scepticism makes the Scriptures silent. Pilate did not believe there was any truth, and if there was it could not be known. He belonged to the school of the elder Pliny, who said, "There is no certainty, except that nothing is certain." I do not wonder that philosophers who have adopted this philosophy can find nothing in the Bible. They must first believe that truth is, and then Christ will tell them what it is.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 47.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 63.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 103; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 289. xxvi. 64.—*Ibid.*, vol. xix., p. 276; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1,364.

Chap. xxvi., vers. 69-75.

PETER'S Denial.

Note: I. The precursors of Peter's fall. (1) Among these we give a prominent place to self-confidence. It will not do to speak of Peter as insincere in his protestations of attachment to the Lord. We must not forget either that he was the only one of the eleven, save John, who followed Jesus into the palace of the high priest. The others had forsaken their master altogether for the time, and so, in a sense, Peter's greater guilt than theirs was owing to his greater love. But the root of the evil in him was that he trusted in his own heart. His self-confidence threw him off his guard, and made him think that he had no need to pray for strength, and so he fell an easy victim to the tempter's stratagems; (2) another precursor of this denial was rashness. Peter had cut off the ear of Malchus. Misplaced bravery is very often, as in this instance, the forerunner of cowardice. If by our folly we put ourselves in jeopardy, we are on the highway to falsehood in order to get ourselves out again; (3) another precursor of these denials was distance from the Lord. "Peter followed afar off." If we are going to follow Jesus at all, the easiest as well as the safest way to do so is to follow Him fully. Decision wards off attack.

II. The aggravations of these denials. These were many. (1) For one thing, Peter had been well warned of his danger. (2) Another aggravation of Peter's denials was connected with the time at which they were uttered. It was with Jesus Himself the hour and power of darkness. If for no other reason than because so many others had forsaken him, the Apostle whom he had so loved and honoured ought to have been firm. (3) Further, these denials were aggravated in Peter's case by the fact that the Lord had given him many special tokens of His regard. (4) These denials were aggravated by the manner in which they were made.

III. The sequel of the denials. Peter lived on his Master's look—a mingling of reproof, of tenderness, and of entreaty—till the Master met him after the resurrection; and the thought of the prayer ("I have prayed for thee that Thy faith fail not") kept him from despair. Had it not been for these things, he, too, might have gone, like Judas, and hanged himself. Note one or two important inferences from this subject: (1) Great prominence in Christ's service does not keep us from peril; (2) our greatest danger does not always lie where we are weakest, but is sometimes where we are usually strongest;

(3) if Peter's fall be a warning against over-confidence, his restoration ought to be an antidote to all despair.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Peter the Apostle*, p. 138.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 69-75.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, pp. 469, 489. xxvi. 74, 75.—W. Bull, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 149. xxvi. 75.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. viii., p. 33; J. Pott, *A Course of Sermons for the Lord's Day*, vol. i., p. 363; E. Garbett, *The Soul's Life*, p. 249. xxvii. 1-19.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 237. xxvii. 1-54.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 153

Chap. xxvii., vers. 3, 4.—"Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood," etc.

THE Remorse of Judas on the Condemnation of Christ.

We gather from the narrative of the Evangelists that the devil had much to do with the treachery of Judas. He became, as it were, given up to the will of the evil one, surrendering himself as an agent in effecting his purpose against the Anointed of God. But, now, are we to think that there was nothing needed with Judas but the laying before him a certain paltry bribe? that there were no scruples to be overcome, no objections to be removed, before he could be brought to the betraying his Lord? Here, as we think, our text comes in, explaining, or at all events suggesting, how Satan proceeded in working up Judas to his infamous treachery. If it were when he saw that Jesus was condemned, that Judas was seized with the agony of remorse, we may fairly suppose that it was under an expectation that Jesus would not be condemned, that Judas was brought to meditate the crime of his betrayal.

I. We may consider it probable, that the devil suggested to Judas, that by placing Christ in the hands of His enemies He would only afford Him an opportunity of showing His power by defeating their malice. Then with what ease may he have gone forward in his iniquitous treason. His very belief that Jesus was the Christ would only confirm him in the belief that, though betrayed, He would not be condemned. Any rising feeling, as to the ungenerousness of his conduct in requiting with perfidy so gracious a Master, would be kept down by the persuasion that he did but seek that Master's glory.

II. There is something very affecting in the fact that Judas gave himself up to despair on seeing that Jesus was given over

to death. Had he had any true notion of what Christ had come to do, it would have been the seeing Him condemned, which would have kept him from suicide. Strange, indeed, was the position of Judas. His was a repentance with no hope, because Christ was condemned; and yet it was Christ's being condemned which should have given hope to repentance. The wretched man died because Christ must die, and yet Christ died that the wretched man might live.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,880.

REFERENCES: xxvii. 3, 4.—C. Girdlestone, *A Course of Sermons*, p. 365; E. Mason, *A Pastor's Legacy*, p. 407.

Chap. xxvii., vers. 3-5.

THE text leads us to the contemplation of the conduct and fate of Judas under the remorse occasioned by his betrayal of his Lord. We cannot think any the better of Judas for feeling that remorse, nor will we for a moment admit it as an extenuation of his guilt. Peter wept bitterly after he had denied Christ; but there was more real penitence in his tears than in the frantic desperation of Iscariot when he had handed over his Master to the accuser. The remorse of Judas was but the beginning of his retribution—the first stripe of the avenging angel's lash, not the bleeding of a contrite or relenting heart.

I. Observe that this remorse was caused by looking at the consequences of his sin rather than at the sin itself. It was "when he saw that Jesus *was condemned*" that he flung down the money before the elders, and gave vent to his despair.

II. The sting of the remorse of Judas arose from the thought of the innocency of Him whom he had betrayed. (1) "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." Although this was the lamentation of his soul, he did not realise the entire greatness of his guilt, because he did not know the full innocence of the betrayed One. Could he but have thought of this, how ineffable would have been his remorse! It drove him to suicide as it was; but if he could have slain himself ten thousand times, it could not have attested all the woe he would have felt had he known all. (2) The sense of wrong-doing eventually becomes *intolerable* to the wrong-doer. He does not feel it at the time, but the retrospect shall bring the retribution. There is a capacity in the human soul for self-review, and a tendency in that direction also. The barbed thoughts will not be kept down, the unwelcome visitors will not be shut out.

III. The next conspicuous idea presented by the text is the worthlessness of worldly gains. The price of innocent blood

lay in the dust, spurned as a loathsome thing by him who had received it; avoided as a merited curse by those who had offered and paid it; no greedy Jew with hardihood enough to pick it up;—a stern and speaking evidence of the worthlessness of guilty gains.

IV. Confederacy in sin does not diminish individual guilt.

V. Note, lastly, the intolerable remorse which sin brings with it, or, at least, brings after it. Whatever we may say about the natural depravity of man, there is a capacity in the soul for suffering through sin, which sometimes makes the thought of a past evil almost maddening. Life to Judas became unbearable, and he went out and hanged himself.

A. MURSELL, *Calls to the Cross*, p. 106.

I. WE see from the repentance of Judas how wide is the difference between a sin in prospect and a sin in retrospect. Before, nothing is in sight but the pleasure, or the honour, or the reward. Afterwards the sting alone remains. Judas had his desire, but along with it a famine entered his soul. Those looks and words of kind and deep compassion—that unceasing self-sacrificing care for his happiness and his good, of which at the time he had thought scorn—now rushed upon his mind with a power which he could not resist; and when he saw that Divine Friend handed over by his instrumentality to suffering and to death, that hard heart was subdued for the moment by a thrill of unwonted tenderness, and he who had betrayed his Lord, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself.

II. Judas repented himself, but with no godly sorrow. His sorrow was neither from God nor towards God. No cry for forgiveness, no entreaty for a new heart, preceded or followed that crushing sense of sin. It was the remorse of despair, the last token of lingering animation in the natural heart, before the light that was in it should have become darkness for ever.

III. For ourselves, then, let us learn not to rest on any signs and circumstances of repentance, but to seek that true renewal of the heart which comes from God only. The nature of the repentance of Judas is proved but too clearly by its end. He had so long despised mercy that at last he despaired of it. How could he, who for three years and a half had accompanied the Lord, had seen His works and heard His words, not only without loving Him, without being attracted by His Divine character, but actually as a spy and a traitor, and who at last had succeeded in delivering Him up to His enemies, and

consigning Him to His last sufferings—how could he even hope, even ask, for forgiveness at God's hand? And if not, why should he linger out in blank and utter despair the few short years that might yet have remained to him upon earth? If an eternity of wretchedness must be endured, why seek to curtail it by a few days or months, which in comparison with its endless duration could be but as a drop in the ocean?

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 81

REFERENCES: xxvii. 3-5.—E. B. Pusey, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 197; E. M. Goulburn, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 139; C. A. Fowler, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 101.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 4.

JUDAS and the Priests—the End of Evil Association.

Note: I. Judas, and the state of mind to which he is brought. (1) The first effect of his sin is separation from human companionship. (2) His sin brought him to a state where he was deserted by himself. (3) His sin separated between his soul and God.

II. The chief priests and their conduct. Note (1) their disregard for their instrument when their purpose is gained. (2) Their attempt to shake off the responsibility of the common act. (3) They end their sinful compact with a taunt.

J. KER, *Sermons*, p. 282.

REFERENCES: xxvii. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 113; R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 36; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 86.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 4 (with Luke xxiii., ver. 34).—"What is that to us? see thou to that."—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

SELF and Christ.

I. Some charges require proof; others are patent, going before unto judgment. The charge of selfishness as a crime of humanity is of the latter kind. To whom need it be proved? As a crime of the race, all plead guilty to it. It is only when we come close home, and charge it upon the man, the separate individual man, that we so much as need a witness. There are forms of selfishness so draped and veiled as to be almost indiscernible. (1) There is a selfishness of earnestness. The man has an end in view, and through quicksands of peril, and over mountains of difficulty, he will reach it or die. The end is a good end; if personal, at least honourable; it may be patriotic; it may be philanthropic; it may be religious. And yet, in his way to it the very earnestness of the aim may make

him harsh, narrow, bitter, overbearing, contemptuous. (2) There is a selfishness of affection. Sometimes the very power of loving, beautiful in itself and Godlike, becomes a snare. Viewed in its aspect towards a third person, it may be selfishness; in its aspect towards God, a giving to the creature of affections formed for the Creator. (3) The selfishness of sin. These men who repudiated all share or concern in the misery of Judas, were men who had not only instigated but hired his treachery. Never expect from the accomplice, from the companion of your sin, a burst of hearty natural sympathy, when that sin finds you out.

II. Christ is unselfishness. To see Him, to be united to Him, to be one with Him—and thus it is to be a Christian—is to be like Him in His unselfishness.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Temple Sermons*, p. 101.

REFERENCES: xxvii. 4-24.—*Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 173. xxvii. 5.—A. Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 348; G. Dawson, *The Authentic Gospel*, p. 252.

Chap. xxvii., vers. 6, 7.

THE Field of Blood.

I. The whole history of the transaction whereby our Saviour was betrayed into the hands of His enemies is brimful of awful interest and solemn edification. First, as proving to us that a man will sell his soul for an utterly vile and paltry thing—and that thing, very possibly, money. Nor can the sin of covetousness occupy so prominent a place in the Gospel, in vain. The reason must be, that we are all more prone to it than we like to believe. Next, it is terribly striking to observe how soon the gratifications of sin prove worthless even in the sinner's eyes; for Judas could not bear to retain his bribe after all.

II. Consider the purpose to which the chief priests are related to have resolved on applying the price of our Lord's blood. It is worth your notice that St. Matthew goes out of his way to relate this circumstance. The precious blood of Christ is so very precious that the very application of the money for which it was sold must needs be related. We learn that the price of Christ's blood was expended in purchasing a field for the burial of strangers; that is of such Gentiles as happened to die at Jerusalem. And what else is this but our own history in a parable? for it is the account of how we, Gentiles, acquired our first interest in the precious blood of Christ. As, by His death, He went to prepare a place for the souls of many; so did He,

in dying, procure a place of rest for the bodies of many, likewise. Thrice happy and blessed he who was first conveyed to Aceldama for sepulture. A Gentile he, who was already joined in a species of sacrament to Christ. And what if it were some believer in the despised Jesus of Nazareth—one of the first Christians—who was the first to be buried in the field which Christ's blood had purchased! Would not the outward circumstance and the inward reality have been in marvellous conformity, and had the strictest historical correspondence? Yes, Abraham's true seed, the members of the Christian Church, begin (like their father Abraham) to inherit the promises; and it is—like him—by having a burial-place given them for a possession; and this at a time when God gave them no inheritance in the land, though He had promised them that in the end they should inherit the whole earth.

J. W. Burgon, *Ibid.*, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, No. 43.

References: xxvii. 6.—F. Hastings, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 168. xxvii. 7.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 76.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 11.—"And Jesus stood before the governor."

I. Profoundly interesting is it to note, as traced by St. John, the mortal duel which is fought out between the Roman governor and the Jewish hierarchs; a duel which is not less real, nor waged the less fiercely, because carried on under forms which partially veil it from our eyes, so that only at certain moments the intense hostility which animates both him and them is permitted to appear. The conflict is undecided long, but the Jewish hierarchs are victorious in the end. And no wonder. They know their own minds, and he only half knows his. They are consistent, thorough-going in evil, he is weak and less than half-hearted in good. Perhaps Pilate might have ventured something in the cause of righteousness and truth; but an accusation at Rome, and to Tiberius, the most suspicious of all tyrants, this he could not brave; and it is with this that the Jewish chief priests threaten him. They will charge him at Rome with this, his unseasonable lenity to a rebel and pretender to Cæsar's throne. This they make Pilate clearly to understand, and this is enough. His guilty conscience tells him, that even if in this matter he could clear himself, there were charges enough of malversation, of violence, of cruelty, which they could bring against him, and from which it would be impossible to clear himself. He was prepared to

drive matters far, but he dared not drive them so far as this. He delivered Jesus unto them to be crucified.

II. And so ends the tragedy of Pontius Pilate—a bad man, but by no means the worst of that wonderful group which are gathered round the Cross of Christ, and on whom that Cross has poured such a flood of light; who, as actors, abettors, or approvers, share the primary guilt of that crime; the secondary guilt of which is shared by us all. A bad man, but very far from the worst; and therefore the more awful example of the crimes in which men may be entangled merely through a lack of moral stamina; for who can attest to us with such a terrible clearness as he does, how little feeble motions towards good will profit—nay, how they will serve only to deepen the damnation of those who refuse to yield obedience to them: who, seeing what is the better part, do yet for by-ends of worldly policy and convenience, and to make things safe and pleasant to themselves, shrink from the painfulness of duty, and leaving that better part, choose the worse?

R. C. TRENCH, *Sermons in Ireland*, p. 212.

REFERENCE: xxvii. 14.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 93.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 19.—"When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just Man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him."

THE great practical truth which ought to be derived from the text is, that, however our actions have been foreknown and overruled by God, we shall be answerable for them, as resulting from our own will and wrought in opposition to sufficient warning and instruction.

I. It may occur to us as in some respects singular, that this vision was to Pilate's wife, and not to Pilate himself. Why was there this indirect communication? We can only say, that this would greatly depend on points in Pilate's character with which we have not full acquaintance, and that we are bound to conclude that God took the course which was best adapted, on the whole, to the circumstances of the case. As the supernatural message came through Pilate's wife, there may have been furnished a double motive to the governor; in addition to obedience to the vision, there may have been the desire of pleasing the person to whom it had been granted. The attachment of Pilate to his wife may have been great; and on such a supposition, the terrors of the vision would have been

more effective upon Pilate as conveyed to him through the tears and entreaties of her whom he loved, than had they burst upon him in their unearthliness, with all the demonstrations of superhuman agency.

II. Observe how greatly it increased the criminality of Pilate, that the message of his wife reached him at the very moment of his taking his place on the judgment seat. Whatever power the vision could have was brought to bear upon him at the precise moment when he most required aid; and the whole thing was ordered, so as to afford him the strongest possible assurance that it had come as a warning from God, and to afford it him when it was most likely to strengthen him to do right. We believe that the same accurate timing of warning and admonition is to be traced in the experience of all, so that, if any one would carefully observe how things fall out when he is exposed to temptation, he would find proof that God sends him seasonable aids, and disposes events to the strengthening him to resist and overcome. Certainly, if He took care that Pilate should receive a message just as he ascended the tribunal whence he would be tempted to deliver a wrong verdict; He will not leave without the appropriate assistance any of those who, being brought into perilous circumstances, are sincerely desirous to keep unsullied their Christian profession.

H. Melvill, *Sermons on Less Prominent Facts*, vol. ii., p. 258.

Consider: I. Pilate's behaviour on the occasion of this memorable trial. Our Lord's accusers told him that they had brought Jesus there on political grounds, because He disturbed the public peace by assuming a royal title, by inciting the people to insurrection, and by forbidding them to pay the customary tribute to Rome. This, of course, was a most transparent falsehood, and the shrewd Roman saw through it at a glance. It was absurd to suppose that an attempt to free the nation from the yoke of the foreigner could be criminal in the eyes of the Jewish Sanhedrim. There must be some deeper motive, which at present he could not fathom, for this particular proceeding. Pilate was inclined to do right, but feared to do right. At one time he thought he would follow his convictions and take the consequences. At another time these consequences seemed so appalling that he shrank from the step which would involve him in them. He hesitated, he wavered, and it was just at this very crisis of his fate that there came a supernatural impulse—a warning from Heaven that he could not have expected

or hoped for to urge him in the right direction. But it was all to no purpose. The populace, instigated by their priests, chose Barabbas for pardon, howled for the death of Jesus; and the unhappy Roman governor gave way when he heard their clamour.

Consider: II. The Saviour's mode of dealing with this unhappy man. It is obvious, on the very surface of the narrative, that Christ did all in His power to save Pilate from the commission of this monstrous crime. He endeavoured to awaken Pilate's conscience, to strengthen his good resolutions, to make him understand the unspeakable importance of the circumstances in which he was placed; and we can see clearly that He produced an impression which although it did not, unhappily, lead to the desired result never passed away entirely from the mind of the Roman official. But another agency still is brought to bear upon the Roman governor, even the supernatural agency connected with the dream of his wife. We may suppose that Pilate was greatly attached to his wife. This circumstance is rendered more probable by the fact that he had brought her with him into the province, whereas to have left her behind would have been in accordance with the usual custom of the Jewish procurators. When this message comes therefore from one of whose sincerity and affection he could not for a moment stand in doubt, can it be supposed that even the words of Jesus Himself would produce a deeper effect upon the mind of this perplexed and vacillating man? I cannot but look upon this incident as the supreme Divine effort for the salvation of the sinner, as the last instrumentality which even God Himself was able to employ, the success or failure of which would decide the question of Pilate's eternal destiny.

G. CALTHROP, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,059.

REFERENCES: xxvii. 19.—T. R. Stevenson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 14; D G. Watt, *Ibid.*, vol. xv., p. 366; G. T. Coster, *Ibid.*, vol. xxviii., p. 118; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1,647; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 246. xxvii. 20—H. Phillips, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 478. xxvii. 20-54.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 248.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 21.—"The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas."

I. ALL of life is one great warfare. Every thought, word, and deed is a portion of it. All the history of our race, from Adam's

fall until our Lord, shall, at His coming, destroy Antichrist with the spirit of His mouth, is one long attempt of the evil one to set up his authority in the place of God's, and to dispute His sovereignty over His creatures. God offers us eternity of bliss, pleasures for evermore in Him: Satan so prolongs the present with busy thoughts and schemes and anticipations, as to hide from us an eternity of woe with him. All time is one history of this one manifold choice. All throughout the whole world is one choice between God and Satan, Christ and Barabbas. We know not, indeed, what we do; and so, again and again, our blessed Lord intercedes for those who deliver Him to His foes. But whenever a choice is given, if we have but any fear that we are choosing amiss, if we do what we suspect to be wrong, or worse, if we say wilfully what we think better unsaid—what do we, in fact, but choose Barabbas?

II. We can never make any real progress in holiness, we can hardly take the very first step, we shall be constantly slipping backwards, until, by God's mercy, we have this stamped upon our souls, that we are ever anew making, that we must in all things make, this choice. There are degrees of choice; as there were degrees and steps in the rejection of our Lord. But there is no safety against making the very worst choice, except in the fixed conscious purpose, in all things to make the best. The character deepens unconsciously; and at last, in men's sight and but for some mighty interposition of God, it becomes fixed; because it has all along been secretly following or resisting grace, and so choosing God, or rejecting Him. Men will not think they sin; the Jews would not think that Jesus was indeed the Christ; but both crucify Him; and to persuade themselves that they do not only makes their repentance hopeless. Men desire to do things for Him, and then by some self-deceit seek to obtain for them praise of men; or they would give themselves to God's service, and then become ambitious, as they think, to promote His glory, and end in becoming worldly. They would love God, and end in loving self. What is all this but strictly to go on the way with Jesus, lead Him into the holy city, sing hosannas to Him, and then prefer to Him Barabbas?

E. B. PUSEY, *Sermons for the Church's Seasons*, p. 274.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 22.—"What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"

I. THE Roman proconsul looks with a strange mixture of awe and surprise at the poor weary prisoner, and asks, "Art *Thou*

a king?" His wife's dream had warned him that there was something uncommon about this man, and he was more than willing to set Him free, for he could find no fault in Him. Pilate's relations with Rome, however, made him afraid to risk a tumult, and so, yielding to the popular clamour which demanded His death, and which threatened to swell into a riot, Pilate delivered Jesus unto them. That was his answer to the awful question of the text.

II. The question which Pilate asked, and which he answered so fatally, is a question which we have, every one of us, still to answer. It is far more awful for us than it was for Pilate. We have to answer it with a full knowledge of what Jesus was and is. We have to answer it aided by the light of centuries streaming upon that Divine Face. So long as Christ is popular, so long as being with Him means going on safely with a rejoicing, happy multitude, there is no doubt or difficulty as to what we will do with Christ; we will gladly follow Him. But there come awful moments in every experience—the Passion Week of every life—when the Christ stands pleading before your soul. A wild, frenzied mob of passions, prejudices, indulgences, sins, raise their murderous clamour, and demand that we shall give Him up—that we shall take into our favour some other popular idol—and each of us has then to answer the question, "What shall I do then with Jesus?" We try to escape it; we endeavour to postpone it as Pilate did, by general discussions about abstract truth. Then we soothe ourselves with the thought that the words which once moved us were exaggerated; *this* cannot be the Christ; until some great moment of trial comes, and the earth and all that we thought solid and durable in life quakes beneath us, and a darkness, perhaps the darkness of death falls upon us; and then old sins, old decisions for evil, come forth from the graves of memory, and appear unto us, and in the agony of our souls we cry, as the terrible conviction then comes upon us: "Truly, this was the Son of God!"

T. T. SHORE, *The Life of the World to Come*, p. 127.

JESUS CHRIST is on His trial again before the research and culture of the nineteenth century. The controversies which once raged round His miracles have now gathered about His Person. For acute thinkers saw it was useless to deny the supernatural, so long as Jesus Christ Himself, the great central miracle in history, passed unchallenged. And now, in this age, thoughtful

man must, sooner or later, ask himself the question which Pilate put to the Jews: "What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called Christ?" And from the motley crowd of Jews and Gentiles, of friends or foes, grouped round that calm majestic figure, come the three chief answers that the human heart can give

I. Tne answer of rejection. The fickle crowd cried, "Let Him be crucified." It was the cry of prejudice, of thoughtlessness, of conscious guilt. That cry finds an echo to-day. It is couched in less offensive language. It is clothed in the garb of poetry and philosophy, of the highest culture; the form is changed, the spirit is unaltered. It is still the answer of rejection: "Away with Him!"

II. From Pilate comes the answer of indifference. He represented the Roman society of his age, which had lost faith in religion and morality, and yet was troubled by dreams; which was at once sceptical and superstitious; whose creed had been summed up by one of its own writers in a notable saying: "There is no certainty save that there is nothing certain, and that there is nothing more wretched or more proud than man"—a nerveless, hopeless, sorrowful creed, the parent of apathy, cynicism, and unrest. Pilate is a picture of that vain and shallow indifference which is too weak to believe in the truth, and yet too fearful to deny it altogether.

III. There were some in that crowd insignificant in number, in wealth, in influence—often, alas! untrue to their own convictions—who could give a very different answer to Pilate's question. One of them the previous night had acted as the spokesman of his brethren, when he said: "Lord, I will follow Thee to prison and to death." They were brave words, the language of a faithful and loving heart—forgotten and broken at the first blush of trial, but nobly fulfilled in after years; and they are the answer of faith.

F. J. CHAVASSE, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, March 2nd, 1882.

NOTE: I. The title given to Jesus in this question: "Jesus which is called Christ." How came Pilate by the knowledge of the descriptive and official title here used—"Christ"? Christ never once occurs in the language of the Jewish clerics addressed to Him, as reported in these chapters. "Christ" is not a Roman word, and it represents no idea that belongs to the Roman religion. Perhaps it was to Him only a sound; but it was a sound that had been sufficiently repeated in his hearing to get

fixed in his memory, and to be regarded as connected with the name of Jesus.

II. The embarrassment that prompted the utterance of this question. When we try to trace what led up to it, our conclusion is, that it began to darkle in his heart long before it came on his lip, in fact, we seem to see it working with silent but gathering strength through all the stages of the trial. The defeat of Pilate's attempt to find a substitute for Jesus had brought him to the last extremity. It was the custom of the Romans, at the feasts, to release a prisoner doomed to die, the people being allowed the right to name him. Pilate wished them to consider Jesus as the sentenced prisoner, but to release Him, and to take in His place a certain infamous criminal called Barabbas. This woke a furious cry of resentment. Then the question came out. Silent until now, at last it found language. His tortuous policy had no other contrivance at command, he lost himself, and did the most pitiable thing a judge can do, that is, he asked the advice of the prosecutors. In a burst of desperation he said, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"

III. Regard this as a present question—What shall you do to Him which is called Christ? will you be neutral? This is what Pilate tried to be. He would take, as he imagined, no part, one way or the other. He had no strong feeling in either direction, no earnestness of any kind, no animus against the accused and none against the accusers: he would only lift a protest, just to satisfy his conscience and save his honour; but would not make a strong stand on either side, and he would simply and fairly keep neutral. We know not a few who are like him. When we think of him, and of those who tread in his steps, two scenes rise before our imagination. The first scene is that of Jesus before the bar of Pilate. Pilate is neutral. The other is that of Pilate at the bar of Jesus. Hell is due; despair is due; sin has to be paid for; Jesus alone is the one constituted Saviour, and now Jesus is neutral. This is a vision: may it never be a reality.

C. STANFORD, *The Evening of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 256.

CHRIST before Pilate—Pilate before Christ.

I. Let us try to account for the hesitation of Pilate to give up the Lord, and then for his final yielding to the clamour of the people. Why all this reluctance on his part to send Jesus to the cross? He was not usually so scrupulous. Wherefore,

then, this unwonted squeamishness of conscience? It was the result of a combination of particulars, each of which had a special force of its own, and the aggregate of which so wrought on his mind that he was brought thereby to a stand. There was (1) the peculiar character of the prisoner; (2) the singular message of his wife; (3) the fatality that there seemed about the case. He had tried to roll it over on Herod, but that wily monarch sent the prisoner back upon his hands. The deeper he went into the case he discovered only the more reason for resisting the importunity of the Jews, and however he looked at it his plain duty was to set the prisoner free. Why, then, again we ask, was his perplexity? The answer is suggested by the taunt of the Jews, "If thou let this man go thou art not Cæsar's friend." He foresaw that if he resisted the will of the rulers he would make them his enemies, and so provoke them to complain of him to the Emperor, who would then institute an inquiry into his administration of his office, and that he was not prepared to face. His past misdeeds had put him virtually into the power of those who were now so eager for the condemnation of the Christ. His guilty conscience made him a coward at the very time when most of all he wanted to be brave.

II. The question of the text is pre-eminently the question of the present age. All the controversies of our times, social, philosophical, and theological, lead up to, and find their ultimate hinge in, the answer to this inquiry, "Who is this Jesus Christ?" Those in the age who have the spirit and disposition of Pilate will anew reject Him; but those who are sincere and earnest in their inquiries will come ultimately out into the light; for "if any man be willing to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

III. And what is true of the age, as a whole, is true also of every individual to whom the Gospel is proclaimed. For each of us this is the question of questions, "What shall I do with Jesus, which is called Christ?" You cannot evade the decision, but be sure that you look at the Christ before you give Him up.

W. M. Taylor, *Contrary Winds*, p. 37.

References: xxvii. 22.—*Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 96; J. Fraser, *University Sermons*, p. 1; H. W. Beecher, *Sermons* (1870), p. 233; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 115. Spurgeon, *Three Hundred Outlines from the New Testament*, p. 31; *New Manual of Sunday-school Addresses*, p. 75. xxvii. 22-26.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 204.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 24.—"When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it."

From this act of Pilate's, I suppose, has arisen a phrase which has passed into the common language of mankind. We talk of washing our hands of a business, and we mean thereby that we will have nothing to do with it. This is exactly what Pilate meant. But there are certain situations in life where it is not possible to rid oneself of a responsibility, and Pilate was precisely placed in such a situation. Act he must, and act he did. How he desired to act the incident recorded in the text shows clearly enough. He would have given much to set our Saviour free. He went through a barren form, therefore, staining his hands with the very water wherewith he washed them, and proclaiming his own guilt even while he declared our Lord's innocence.

I. Most persons are secretly inclined to pity rather than to blame Pilate; for his conduct gives one the notion of a man driven by circumstances to pursue a course which was contrary to his nature. I take leave to say at once that this is a mistake. Pilate's nature is a matter of express record, and it proves to have been stubborn, pitiless, inflexible, implacable. Harsh, stern, relentless, and unfeeling he is proved by many of his known acts to have been. If we behold Pilate thus irresolute, it is not him we must pity, but the mercies of Christ which we must rather admire. We infer the calm majesty, the grand innocence, the overwhelming nobility of the Lord, that the sight of Him could fairly unnerve, and overawe, and paralyze, and perplex such a one as Pontius Pilate.

II. It is remarked by Bishop Pearson (in his book on the Creed) that it was "necessary to include the name of Pilate in our Creed: (1) that we might for ever be assured of the time when our Saviour suffered; (2) because Pilate gave a most powerful external testimony to the certainty of our Saviour's death, and the innocency of His life; (3) that thereby we might understand how it came to pass that Christ should suffer, according to the Scriptures." But I am persuaded that there is yet another reason why the name of the Roman governor is there, and it is in order that it might be an eternal reminder to men that, with every sinful transaction the name of him who connives at it, as well as of him who commits it, is linked in God's sight, and will be linked for ever. The contriver of

an iniquity is the doer thereof, but the abetter of sin is by no means guiltless. His name is tied fast to it, and can never be disconnected from it any more.

J. W. BURGON, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, No. 37.

REFERENCES: xxvii. 24.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 115; vol. iii., p. 213; W. M. Taylor, *Three Hundred Outlines from the New Testament*, p. 32.

Chap. xxvii., vers. 24, 25.

THE Character of Pilate.

I. There is nothing in the Gospel account of Pilate which is repugnant to the representation of Philo and Josephus. A man of the world without principle is described in both. Nowhere can we fasten on Pilate one single conviction, whether moral or religious. When he came in contact with firm belief in others he was utterly perplexed. When the Jews had remonstrated against bringing the effigies of Cæsar into the city he threatened them with instant death; but the Jewish historian tells us that they bared their throats to the sword, saying, "Death is better than that our laws should be broken," and the weak spirit was overcome by a courage so unintelligible—how could men be willing to die upon a question of images?—and he laid his cruel threats aside, not without admiration, and carried back the obnoxious ensigns to Cæsarea. For ten years he managed to govern the most stubborn people of all the tributaries of the Empire, for a master hard to please. Perhaps from the Roman point of view he had merits as a governor. Where he saw his way clearly he was firm. His cruelty and harshness appeared, perhaps, the best means of restraining a most turbulent race, and so were adopted deliberately. Pilate was a man, then, devoted to his own profession, doing his best to satisfy the master whom he served, and hoping to be rewarded in time with a higher command. But the Jews knew well the weak point in his position, and the power which it gave them over him: "If thou let this man go thou art not Cæsar's friend."

II. Instead of thinking the Roman governor a monster without parallel, I am persuaded that characters of that type are the commonest that can be found. The man who, much occupied in his own worldly engagements, becomes convinced, by some means of God's sending, that Christ is truly the Son of God and our Redeemer, yet has not the moral courage to take that truth home to his heart, and let it fashion all his life without

regard to what others may say of him, is that a character hard to discover? To say "I find no fault in him," to wash the hands from participation in His blood, to set up over Him "The King of the Jews," and refuse to take it down—such was the Christianity of Pilate; and I fear that many men go no farther. If, from the fear of being singular, we dare not follow Him whom we know to have the right to lead us, then Pilate's sin is repeating itself in us.

ARCHBISHOP THOMSON, *Lincoln's Inn Sermons*, p. 47.

REFERENCES: xxvii. 24, 25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1,648; H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 92.

Chap. xxvii., vers. 24-31.

BEHOLD the Man.

I. Behold the Man, and see who He is. We see that He is a real and actual man. Men had been on the outlook for that Son of God who should come down in the likeness of man. Perhaps no one expected that the Coming One would prove to be a real man; perhaps even the Jews, to whom pertained the oracles of God, rejected that idea as incongruous and mean, and thought that no hint could be found that Jehovah would ever dwell among them in the nature of such humanity as they could yet imagine; but all expected Him "in the likeness of man." At last He came. "Behold the Man."

II. Behold the Man, and see the tokens of His sorrow. (1) See in these tokens inflictions meant to express contemptuous rejection. (2) See in these sufferings, the tokens of which Christ bore upon Him, some of the sufferings that He volunteered to endure for us men, and for our salvation.

III. Behold the Man, and decide upon what you mean to do. Decide whether you will vote, or not vote, for his crucifixion, was Pilate's meaning. That question was settled instantly, but the words are used now to quicken your decision on questions of infinite moment still pending. (1) Behold Him, and say whether you will trust your souls with Him or not. Make sure against mistakes on a question so vital as this. Consult the book which is the only verbal authority on the question, the only ultimate standard by which you can decide all controversies in relation to it; resolve to act on what that book declares, and say, will you trust Jesus Christ only, or not? There is not a moment left for trying experiments or making delays. The present life is but "a comma in the endless volume of eternity," and to some of you but a fraction of this life remains. If there be any

other foundation on which to build, build upon it; if there be any other name given under heaven, in which you may safely trust for your salvation, trust in that favourite name; if there be any other and any better refuge, fly to it; but if not, at once behold as your one undivided object of trust the Saviour whom we preach. (2) Behold Him, and settle whether you will take Him for your example or not. "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps."

C. STANFORD, *Evening of our Lord's Ministry*, p. 289.

Chap. xxvii., vers. 26-51 (with Mark xv., vers. 15-37).

CHRIST on the Cross.

Christ on the Cross is our subject. You know His history, And when you read, "The people stood beholding" you will be ready to add, "And no wonder." Here, before their eyes, was the tragic consummation of a life that was begotten by the Holy Ghost, born of a virgin, and signalized at its birth by the homage of both heaven and earth.

I. His nature was singularly complete. No one of the constitutional temperaments usually distinctive and characteristic of other men is seen in Him, for all of them are resolved in the perfect completeness of His manhood.

II. This completeness of nature displays itself in a corresponding harmony of life. Though of Jewish birth, He was free from bigotry and wedded to no class opinions. In His life there was no excess nor defect, no exaggeration nor narrowness. It presents a complete sphere of beautiful virtue and devout piety, in which all qualities find room for equable adjustment and contribute to an intenser harmony.

III. Notwithstanding such an inward fulness of perfect being, but indeed because of it, His life was full of grief and trouble; His countenance was marred; He was a man of sorrows; grief was His acquaintance, for while His own soul was clear as a morning without clouds, He ever shared the lot of those who sat in darkness, that He might lessen their gloom. He lived not to Himself, but gave His life in service to all.

IV. What think we of Him? Who can doubt that among all the sons of men He only is *the* Son of man, humanity's root and flower; that in Him all men are united in their ground and Head? But if among the sons of men He only is *the* Son of man, it can only be because, among all the sons of God, He only is *the* Son of God, embodying and representing

the fulness and glory of God as He embodies and represents the fulness and glory of man. Let us learn to regard His death as sin's great act, as the culminating deed of sinful development in the world's history. The spiritual and worldly powers unite to crucify the Holy One of God. The cross of Christ is a revelation of the sin and guilt of the whole world. But, wonder of wonders! if it is sin's great act, it is also sin's great cure. The cross, which is a monument of the world's doom, is also a standard of the world's deliverance.

W. PULSFORD, *Trinity Church Sermons*, p. 119.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 29.—"And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!"

JESUS and Tiberius.

I. Consider the equity of mankind, which was at the same moment awarding to Jesus derision, torture, death, and to Tiberius the most servile and adulatory homage. The equity of mankind, did I say? May we with reverence ascend higher than mankind, and without impeaching the righteousness of the Supreme, ask why His lightnings were not despatched to calcine that Roman despot, and why legions of angels did not descend upon the Prætorium of Pontius to rescue Jesus from His executioners? Why do success and honour wait thus obsequiously upon vice, while holiness encounters only failure and contempt? Is this earth the workmanship and property of One in whom mercy and righteousness meet together? or is it the plaything of some malign power who delights only in obliquity, incongruity, and paradox?

II. What the vulgar world counts ignominious and of low esteem is not the measure of real and moral greatness, or of real and supreme happiness. Look for a moment at the scene especially presented to us in the narrative of the agony in Gethsemane; the cruelty in the Prætorium; the tragedy upon the cross; the burial in the Arimathean's garden; and then pass to that august day when the conscience of all nations shall be brought before the judgment-seat of Christ. Here, then, with what a different tone it is exclaimed, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Yes; Hail, King of Jew, and King of Gentile, and King of all humanity! It was Thou who didst first reveal to us a universal Father of compassion, a compassion wider than the east is from the west; it was Thou who didst teach us

that though He sits upon a throne in heaven, He permits us also to receive Him as a guest into our hearts; it was Thou who, by sealing upon the cross the truths which have redeemed mankind, hast won a name which is above every name, and at which every knee must bow.

W. H. BROOKFIELD, *Sermons*, p. 216.

REFERENCES: xxvii. 29.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1,168; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 53; F. W. Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 270; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 85; G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines of Sermons*, p. 406; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. vi., p. 212. xxvii. 32.—T. Gasquoine, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 85. xxvii. 35.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 294; B. J. Snell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 372; Case, *Short Practical Sermons*, p. 104.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 32.—"And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear His cross."

I. WE could not spare this incident; it would leave a gap in the evangelical histories, which it would be quite beyond our power to fill. We have indeed evidence that Christ could hunger and thirst and be weary—and all such evidence is precious, as testifying to the real humanity of the Saviour. But, nevertheless, the evidence is far from being considerable; and if you set it against the account of a crucifixion, in which there is not the least proof that any pain was felt, you might find it hard to furnish a convincing demonstration that Christ suffered in the body like one of ourselves. But the text gives evidence enough to assure the most doubtful that He is verily a man, with all a man's susceptibilities, His consciousness of pain, His capacity of being tortured. For as He came out from the city, bearing His cross, so worn down was He by His sufferings, so faint with loss of blood, so exhausted by fatigue, that even His remorseless enemies either pitied Him or feared that He would die before He was crucified; the soldiers "found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, and him they compelled to bear His cross."

II. We can hardly doubt that an event, which has apparently so much significance, was designed to be received by us as a parable, and interpreted as a lesson to the Church. What the Saviour had spoken of, and what He had enjoined, was simply the bearing of the cross—the performing duties and the submitting to endurances, from which nature might be adverse, but which were appointed unto those who would gain eternal life. He had not spoken of His own cross as that which His

disciples were to carry; but now, before He departs from the world, He would teach them that they must not only bear some cross or other, if they would follow Him to glory, but that very cross which He carried Himself. Many a cross is of our own manufacture, our troubles are often but the consequences of our sins, and we may not dignify these by supposing them the cross which is to distinguish the Christian. Crosses they may be, but they are not the cross which was laid upon Simon, and which had first been on Christ. He alone bears Christ's cross who suffers in His cause, who has troubles to endure simply because he is a Christian.

H. MELVILL, *Sermons on Less Prominent Facts*, vol. ii., p. 208.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 36.—"And sitting down they watched Him there."

THE lessons that the incident teaches us may be very simply gathered together.

I. First we infer from this the old truth of how ignorant men are of the real meaning and outcome of what they do. These four Roman soldiers were foreigners; I suppose they could not speak a word to a man in that crowd. They had plenty of practice in crucifying Jews. It was part of their ordinary work in these troublesome times, and this was just one more. They went back to their barracks stolid and unconcerned, and utterly ignorant of what they had been about. Well, now, so are we all, though in less extreme fashion. No man knows the real meaning, and none of us know the possible issues and outcome, of a great part of our lives. We are like people sowing seed in the dark; it is put into our hands, and we sow. We do the deed; this end of it is in our power, but where it runs out to, and what will come of it, lie far beyond our ken.

II. Take another very simple and equally plain lesson from this incident; viz., the limitation of responsibility by knowledge. These men were ignorant of what they were doing, and therefore they were guiltless. Christ said that Himself: "They know not what they do." But it is marvellous to observe that while the people that stood round the cross, and were associated in the act that led Jesus there, had all degrees of responsibility, the least guilty of the whole were the men that did the actual work of nailing Him to the cross, and lifting it with Him upon it. As knowledge and light rise and fall, so responsibility rises and falls along with them.

III. The last lesson is, How possible it is to look at Christ on the cross and see nothing.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, August 5th, 1886.

REFERENCES: xxvii. 36.—*New Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 18; Lefroy, *Literary Churchman, Sermons*, p. 96; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 148.

Chap. xxvii., vers. 39, 40.—"And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself."

THE First Effect of the Crucifixion.

Let us—I. Identify the persons who uttered this taunt. They were, I think, not like the other people present, there on purpose for the show; no idlers, no loiterers, no sightseers were they. They were bound for the city, and we may fairly assume that they were bound on business. We are not directly told that they were the persons elsewhere spoken of as the buyers and sellers in the Temple, but that they were so is a fair and almost inevitable inference from recorded facts.

II. Recall the speech of Christ which had given these revilers such deep offence. The Lamb of God was the Son of God, and therefore Lord of the Temple. This He declared Himself to be. It was no unsustained assertion; the supernatural power put forth, both in what He said and what He did, proved it. These men now remembered His words in answer to their former demand for a sign, "Destroy this temple, and I will build it again in three days." In the sudden light of hell fire they saw that these words might be so reported as to secure His conviction for a capital offence. They had no time personally to work the contrivance, but there hung about the doorways vile creatures who would swear to anything for money, and two of these they paid to be ready when called upon to swear thus: "This fellow said, I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and to build it in three days."

III. See how these men turned this speech of Christ into ridicule. They exulted to see Him on the cross. They were not afraid that He could hurt them now. It was perfectly safe to insult that which was dying on a cross, therefore they insulted the Sufferer, and this was the spirit of their terrible mirth, "Come down from the cross, if you can! You cast us out of the Temple twice; cast us out again."

IV. Observe that just at the time when this saying was being ridiculed it was being verified. All was coming to pass just as He had said. He had never said, "I will destroy this

temple;" when He said "Destroy it" the force of the word was declarative rather than imperative, and He only intimated that if they did, or when they did, destroy His body, He would raise it again in three days. The first part of the oracle was now being fulfilled; the body was being destroyed. The second part was to be fulfilled in three days.

V. Observe the indifference to the death of Christ which these words imply. These men had their fling at the Crucified One; but the crucifixion was no business of theirs; their business was in the city. Jesus heard the men fling their taunt, saw them pass by, and was hurt because they had no pity for themselves. The words of the prophet express the spirit of Jesus, His spirit then, His spirit now, "Is it nothing to you that pass by?"

C. STANFORD, *Voices from Calvary*, p. 71.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 40.—"Come down from the cross."

THE First Prayer to the Crucified One.

I. Think of the speech as spoken by those who were passing by. Their complete phrase was, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." It was no easy thing for these men to believe that Christ was the Son of God. When they had been in His congregation they saw that sure enough He was a man. A man's foot flashed out that wet print in the sand; a man's voice lived in His lips; it was a man's tear that they saw glisten. Now, pointing to that which was on the cross, whatever were the words they actually uttered, the language of their spirit was, "Look at that! is the Godhead under that veil of horror? is it likely?" "Come down from the cross," they cried, and in that cry they dared Him to come down.

II. Think of this challenge as spoken by the leaders of the people. It is plain that their minds were not easy. The mental questions would arise, "Have we gone too far? Is it possible that we have made a tremendous mistake? What if, after all, this should be the Christ of God, the King of Israel?" To keep down their doubts, to keep up their courage, they drew together in close conference, and talked one to another in answer to unspoken language of horrible misgiving and surmise. "Is that the Saviour? He cannot save *Himself*—that the King! He is not even King over that cross."

III. Think of the cry as spoken by the soldiers. For them the word "Christ" was jargon; the word "Israel" had no meaning; but the word "King" roused them to a rough and

terrible play. To them it was rare sport to make believe that this was a coronation day, and grimly ridiculous to speak of a king crowned with thorns, and nailed upon his throne; and they, therefore, caught up the banter, and joined in the chorus of infamy.

IV. Think of this cry as joined in by one, if not both, of the malefactors. It is at least certain that one of the dying men struck in with the cruel cry. A storm of voices rang out the call, "Come down from the cross." The only answer to this exasperating demand was a kingly expressive silence. (1) It was the silence of power; (2) the silence of intensity in resistance of temptation; (3) He was silent because it was a moral impossibility that He should have come down from the cross; (4) it was the silence of One who was doing a great work, and who would not stop to answer trivial words about it.

C. STANFORD, *Voices from Calvary*, p. 93.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 42.—"He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe Him."

THE Patience of Christ on the Cross.

I. It was a cruel aggravation of the sufferings of our blessed Lord to heap reproaches on His head, even after His enemies had secured His condemnation. Their revilings proved their malice. As to the motives of their conduct, Nature seems to plead with us for them, that such inhuman cruelty was not their own by nature. The truth is, they were not their own masters; they were the ministers of Satan. They had so wilfully indulged their deadly temper that they were given over to Satan, and in these words, "Come down from the cross," they were uttering the wish of Satan.

II. And here, again, is a terrible lesson! All mankind shall minister to the glory of God—some by receiving His saving mercy, some by falling under His awful judgment. Have you ever thought of the meaning of these words in the Proverbs, "The Lord hath made all things for Himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil?" Christ had taken upon Himself the work of the atonement, and He would not put it down till it was finished. Think how sublime is His patience. He was deserted by His friends, surrounded by His enemies. With one movement of His limbs He could have loosened the nails, and stepped upon the earth, and made it shake with the tread of angels' feet. But they cried on, and louder, "Come down

from the cross." He seems as one that is deaf and does not hear. It was not His Divine nature, impassive and insensible of temptation, but His strong human purpose of obedience, that was the secret of His undeviating patience. Human nature in His person felt the force of counter attractions and overcame them; it swerved not from its single purpose.

III. The transcendent result of this patience is, of course, the perfection of the atonement; but there is another, worthy of all consideration. Observe the repose and tranquillity which result from patience. Around our Lord there were confused cries and restless tormenting questionings; but He was calm and serene, because He had a single purpose and was patient. The depth of His repose you may attempt to conjecture by His sublime silence, by the calmness of His speech when His lips moved, by His unselfish regard for others. He let the order of Eternal Wisdom take its course; He never interrupted it. He had come for one purpose, only to fulfil it; and while heaven and hell met in conflict, and the earth shook with the concussion, He was calm, and gentle, and full of peace.

C. W. FURSE, *Sermons at Richmond*, p. 32.

REFERENCES: xxvii. 42.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 89; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 26; *Ibid.*, vol. v. p. 159; H. G. Robinson, *Man in the Image of God*, p. 139; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 245.

Chap. xxvii., vers. 42, 43.—"He saved others; Himself He cannot save," etc.

THE Mockers at the Cross.

I. The first remark that strikes me as deducible from the whole of these words before us is this, that Christ's cross apparently shatters to fragments Christ's claims. Either Jesus Christ died and rose again from the dead, and then He is the Son of God, as He claimed to be; or He died like other men, and there is an end of it. And then it is of no use to talk about Him as a wise teacher and a lovely perfect character; He is a fanatical enthusiast, all the beauty of whose religious teaching is marred and spoiled by the extravagant personal claims which He attached to it. We must dismiss the fair dream of a perfect Man, unless we are prepared to go farther, and say an incarnate God. The cross of Christ shatters the claims of Christ, except He be risen from the dead and exalted to the right hand of God.

II. "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." The

cross of Christ is a necessity, to which He voluntarily submitted in order to save a world. These men only needed to alter one letter to be grandly and gloriously right. If instead of "could not," they had said "would not," they would have grasped the very heart of the power, and the very central brightness of the glory of Christianity. It was His own will, and no outward necessity, that fastened Him there; and that will was kept steadfast and immovable by nothing else but His love. He Himself fixed the iron chain which bound Him.

III. The cross is the throne of Christ. In one aspect His death is the lowest point of His humiliation; in another it is the highest point of His glorifying. In one aspect it is His stooping to the lowliest condition of the lowly whom He would serve; in another it is, as He called it Himself, the hour in which "the Son of man shall be glorified."

IV. The concluding taunt here gives us another thought, viz., that the death of Christ is the great proof that God had delight in Him. Christ's faith never reached a higher energy than it did in that solemn and mysterious moment when it blended with the sense of desolation in that cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and God's delight in His well-beloved Son reached its highest energy in the same moment when He became obedient unto death.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, Nov. 12th, 1885.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 45.—"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour."

GOOD FRIDAY and its Lessons.

There are two outward incidents recorded in connection with the story of the crucifixion which always impress the mind with a sense of solemnity: one is the rending of the veil of the Temple, the other is the darkness which is recorded to have passed over the face of the land. I propose to say a few words on the dark shadow which belongs to the best of things. We must not be discouraged if we find that the Divine light, coming into the world of human mist and darkness, has itself been at times obscured by that darkness; and now on this great day, this supreme trial of the Christian faith, it might have seemed that Christianity had turned out to be a failure. The grandest career, the holiest cause that ever dawned upon the earth, had ended not in a splendid triumph, but in a dismal ignominious defeat. What, then, do we learn from this?

I. The first lesson is patience and perseverance. We must

be patient with others if they stumble in this darkness, if they do not at once find their way towards the truth. There is a darkness of the light for the whole earth, or at least a shadow of suspense and of waiting in which it may well be that some shall find it their first duty to stand and wait, for whom Luther's text and motto is their best decree, "In silence and in hope shall be our strength."

II. And secondly, the darkness of Good Friday at the cross of Calvary is a likeness of the opposition which each one of us ought to be and will be called to face in doing his duty. Those only can avoid offence who shrink from their appointed tasks, who yield to everything, and who so pass out of life without being spoken against because they never will be spoken of at all. "No cross, no crown;" that is to say, if there is no effort there will be no result worth having.

III. The darkness of the dismal tragedy of the Crucifixion, combined with what followed, reminds us of this yet further consoling truth: Failures are not perpetual failures. Good Friday was a failure as regarded all outward appearance, but after it came Easter Day, and Easter Day was a complete contrasting success.

A. P. STANLEY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 193.

REFERENCE: xxvii. 45.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1,896.

Chap. xxvii., vers. 45, 46.

THE Cry from the Depths.

I. We have to speak about the darkness. Note (1) that it was a darkness which science is unable to explain. It was not the darkness of night, for it began at twelve o'clock in the day. It was not the darkness of an eclipse, for it was then full moon, and it is only at the new moon that eclipses of the sun can take place. (2) The darkness was in keeping with the cry which at this time hung over the Redeemer's spirit. God was pleased to make Nature visibly sympathize with the passion of His Son. The crowning crime of men, the crime of killing the Prince of Life, and so of casting out the Lord of Nature from His own world, was not to pass without some expostulation of Nature itself against it. (3) Regard the darkness at the Crucifixion as a sign from God, intended not only to mark the importance of the event transpiring, but to work upon the consciences of the crucifiers before the deed was done.

II. We have now to speak about the cry. (1) What was there in this cry different from any other dying cry? We must

take choice of two alternatives; one is that the cry came from a faintness of heart that was unworthy of a man, the other that it came from feeling a mystery of sin-bearing, unfathomable and Divine. That was the cup "tasted," the cup for the passing away of which from Him, if it were possible, He prayed, and to the drinking of which, if the Will required it, He solemnly devoted Himself. (2) The cry had been foretold. The exclamation, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" is the first verse, and sounds the very key-note, of the 22nd Psalm. Regarding that psalm as a prophecy of Christ's thoughts while on the cross, we may fairly regard this verse as indicating the thought that would then have first place and power in the great Atoner's mind. (3) In this cry we have the perfect example of trust in trial. Just then, when He was being crucified in weakness, His cry was "My Strength, My Strength." Although in that hour of darkness He does not utter that happy cry "My Father," He, as the perfect Man, clung fast to his Rock, held on through all the blows of the waves and billows; and even in this short burst of language in agony applied to God the word "My" twice over, appropriating the "Living Strength" as His very own.

C. STANFORD, *Voices from Calvary*, p. 159.

REFERENCES: xxvii. 45, 46.—*New Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 23. xxvii. 45, 51.—*Ibid.*, p. 23.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 46.—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

"WHY hast Thou forsaken Me?" May we dare to answer that desolate cry? may we presume to take up the question and say, "Lord, it was for us men, and for our salvation?"

I. First, that we might learn what sin is, how deadly, to cause Thy suffering; how hateful in the sight of God, that Thou shouldest feel Thyself forsaken of Him for so much as coming nigh to it, even to bear and to destroy it.

II. Secondly, that we might know how entirely Thou didst take and carry it—yea, for an Apostle has said it—didst even *become* sin; that we might feel it gone, and in our new freedom might even, as the same holy Apostle has said, become righteousness in Thee.

III. Thirdly, that we might distinguish between the feeling and the reality of God's desertion; that we might learn, in Thee, to trust Him even when we cannot see, even when we are out of the sunshine of His smile, in the shadow of that spiritual

solitude which is darker, yea, darker far, than the valley of death itself.

IV. And so, finally, that we might be made willing, if need be, even to die thus; even to be made like Thee in Thy uttermost desolation, when, with the sins of a world upon Thee, and with tenfold need of the brightest ray from heaven to make the load endurable, Thou wast called to taste death itself in darkness, teaching us that it is not comfort, but safety, not the consciousness, but the reality of God's love, which is indispensable; that as there is of course no merit, so neither is there always any advantage, in that confidence of acceptance, in that serenity of hope, in that broad daylight of assurance which some make the essence of faith or the whole of religion.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Words from the Cross*, p. 43.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 46.

CONSIDER the nature of our Lord's spiritual cross. It was the being brought under all the conditions of a sinner, though Himself without sin. Sin tried upon Him all its powers, first to lure, afterwards to destroy. As for instance—

I. He was tempted by direct suggestions of evil. The approaches of the wicked one were made to the will of the Son of God, with the design of withdrawing the consent of His pure soul from His heavenly Father. They were a thousandfold more hateful and harrowing than the falsehood of His suborned accusers, or the scourging of His sinless flesh.

II. Again, He suffered a perpetual unmingled sorrow for the sins of men. Doubtless the destinies of His Church on earth stood like a lowering horizon behind the Mount of Crucifixion. The rents and wounds of His mystical body already pierced His spirit; and the false kiss which the world should give, to the betrayal of His Church; and the afflictions of His saints, and the tyranny of the strong, and the pampered self-pleasing of soft spirits, and the plagues of worldliness, and the foreseen apostasy of the latter days—all these dwelt heavily on Him to whom all things to come are as things that are.

III. And once more: He suffered throughout we know not how large a portion of His whole life the natural fear of death and of His coming agony. We know with what a piercing strength the first glimpses of a coming sorrow shoot in upon us; how they chequer our whole life, and overshadow all

things; how sad thoughts glance off from all we do, or say, or listen to; how the mind converts everything into its own feeling and master-thought. Perhaps our keenest sufferings are in sudden recollections, remote associations, indirect hints, words, tones, little acts of unconscious friends. And even so it was with Him. When a lowly woman anointed Him with ointment He saw in it the preparation for the grave.

IV. And as the chief of all His sorrows, He suffered we know not what darkness of soul upon the cross. He was made sin for us.

There is one more truth we may learn from what has been said. I mean, what necessity there is that all should be thus crucified with Him. Suffering is sharp and piercing, but it cleanses, purifies; it puts in the sharper lines and the deeper colouring; it is as the shadow of His crown of thorns.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 258.

REFERENCES: xxvii. 46.—*Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 168; J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 264; G. Macdonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, 1st series, p. 163. xxvii. 46, 47.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 142.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 50 (with John xix., ver. 30).—"Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost." "It is finished."

I. THE words "It is finished" are an expression of relief. Who can rightly conceive what a relief to Jesus, in His perfect human nature, it was to have passed through all His appointed sufferings? How much was finished when His course of suffering came to an end! (1) There was all the pain which His holy soul endured from the nearness of the world's corruption, and from the virulence of the world's hatred. (2) The words express His sense of relief from the assaults of the powers of darkness. (3) They express His sense of relief from all He suffered in His experience of the wrath of God.

II. These words express an anticipation of satisfying rest. Between Him and the actual enjoyment in human nature of the rest awaiting Him in the Father's house there was yet the act of dying. But His eye looked, as to something very near, to the "joy set before Him." On that very day His soul was to be in Paradise, and in continuation of this there stretched eternally before His view what awaited Him as "the Lamb who was slain," in the rest, the blessedness, and the glory of a place "in

the midst of the throne of God." In an anticipation of this, so near, there was present rest to His human soul. There was rest to Him also in the results of the work which He finished on the cross.

III. These words are a shout of triumph. The very finishing of the work of Christ, apart from its design and results, was a victory. (1) "Through death He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil." (2) He in His death triumphed over sin. (3) He won a triumph over the world. (4) He knew that in the moment when His spirit was gone out of His body, to it death should be for ever past, and that His death should be the death of the death of all His people. (5) He could bear to think of His body being laid in the grave, after His soul had passed into Paradise; for such was His view of His victory over the grave that He could not in the near prospect of it but raise a shout of triumph.

IV. These words are a "joyful sound." (1) They convey the joyful news that the great work of redemption is completed. (2) They tell us that the everlasting covenant is sealed, and that if we come to Christ we shall obtain, on the ground of His finished work, a right to all its blessings. (3) They tell us that you can find in Christ a right to victory over every enemy.

J. KENNEDY, *Sermons*, No. 29.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 51.—"And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain."

The rending of the veil proclaims—(1) that man, as man, has access to the heavenly temple; (2) that the powers of the world to come have entered into and possessed man and his world; (3) the final overthrow and abolition of death.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 386.

REFERENCE: xxvii. 51.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 110.

Chap. xxvii., vers. 51-4.

THE Language of the Signs.

I. The earthquake. This was—(1) a sign wrought by the direct and unusual interposition of the Creator. (2) It was a sign to alarm men, on account of the capital crime which they had just committed. There is no such alarum as an earthquake. When thunder is travelling under foot, when the ground opens and shuts, when great pits suddenly yawn in the heaving floor, and make massive walls topple on to it, then "the heart meditates

terror, and is moved out of its place." To shake the hearts, to shake the conscience, to shake up men from the dull dream of a sense-bound existence did God shake the earth, in the moment when man had just crucified His Son. (3) The earthquake was a sign by which God called attention to the Divine work, which, through the medium of the human work, had just been done. (4) The earthquake was a sign through which God caused the earth to pay royal honour to Jesus, when Jesus died. (5) The earthquake may furnish an illustration of the power that is to work wonders in connection with the cross of Christ.

II. The rent veil. (1) The rending of the veil was, as it was intended to be, the sign which the Jews noticed first. To them, as Jews, the earthquake, in comparison, was a mere nothing; they forgot the earthquake when they thought of the veil. (2) The rending of the veil was a sign that the Jewish dispensation was now, by God's own act, abolished. (3) The rending of the veil was a sign showing that now, by the death of Christ, there was a revelation of the mystery hid from ages. (4) The rent veil was a sign by which God declared that a free right of way into the Holiest was henceforth open to all.

III. The sign next in order was seen in the opening of the graves and the rising of the dead. Who were these that were raised? What was it precisely that happened at the moment of the Lord's death? It is vain to conjecture, but at least the miracle teaches how, by the work of Calvary, Christ has power and authority to reconquer from the grasp of death the life that He once created.

IV. There is another sign to study in connection with the death of Christ, and that is the effect of these foregoing signs on the centurion and his companions. The only man who dared to give Jesus His Divine title was one of the soldiers who were the first sinners for whom He had offered the prayer, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

C. STANFORD, *Voices from Calvary*, p. 233.

REFERENCES: xxvii. 55, 56.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 230; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 258. xxvii. 57-60.—S. Leathes, *Truth and Life*, p. 175.

Chap. xxvii., vers. 57-66.

BURIED with Christ.

I. There was an old heathen philosophy that taught deadness to this world; it required the thorough laying aside of all human feelings and passions; but what it inculcated partook of that

awful and dread calm which nature itself derives from the grave of man; it had nothing of the peace which the Christian learns by the tomb of Christ, wherein there is release from sin by dying with His death, and in those fruits of righteousness wherein God still works, while He gives rest. There Christ, being dead, yet speaketh, while by His Spirit He quickeneth our mortal bodies. The world invites us to live to it; philosophy bids us to be dead to the world, but Christianity adds, in order that we may live to God. We are not only to be dead with Christ, but to learn of Him and live with Him, if we would find His rest for the soul.

II. Though the Christian be dead to the world, and so really unharmed by it, yet the world will not be dead towards him. This is a great and important truth. The world at this time and at all times lies upon the Church of God like a heavy and oppressive weight, that would stifle and crush it if it could. It is so in the great public at large, as you will find in popular assemblies, in the books and daily records which speak its voice. It is the Pharisee again and again, consulting with Pilate, and speaking of "that deceiver." And the weak Christian is harassed, angry, yet half-ensnared by it, and often shaken in his opinions and his conduct; for the world itself, even in its enmity, seems to be half-Christian, for it says, "That deceiver saith, I will rise again." Though unwilling, it bears testimony; and from a kind of uneasiness and fear which lies deep within it is urged to deeds of ill-will and enmity, and this is a trial to the love and faith of good but over-anxious disciples, because it seems to dishonour their Lord. But our blessed Saviour seems from the sepulchre to say, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God." What is desirable is not merely that we should not be troubled, but seeing, as in the history of this day, how God is bringing good out of evil, and making all things work together for the good of those that love Him, that we should adore His unsearchable judgments, that with love and wonder we should wait for Him, "more than they that watch for the morning."

I. WILLIAMS, *Sermons on the Epistles and Gospels*, vol. i., p. 386.

REFERENCES: xxvii. 57-66.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 210. xxvii. 61.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1,404; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii, p. 56. xxvii. 62-4.—*Ibid.*, p. 273. xxvii. 66.—J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 509; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 224. xxvii.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 60; R. S. Candlish, *Scripture Characters and Miscellanies*, p. 75.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 1.—"The first day of the week."

I. A DAY of mighty memories; (1) of the creation of the world; (2) of the resurrection of Christ; (3) of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

II. A day of noble and happy associations; (1) historical; (2) congregational; (3) personal.

III. A day of holy hopes; (1) of a holier Sabbath; (2) of a holier sanctuary; (3) of a holier character.

IV. A day of solemn duties; (1) private; (2) domestic; (3) public.

G. BROOKS, *Five Hundred Outlines of Sermons*, p. 256.

REFERENCES: xxviii. 1.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 197. xxviii. 1-10.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 298; H. R. Reynolds, *Notes of the Christian Life*, p. 242. xxviii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 863; S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 148. xxviii. 5.—W. Harris, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 368.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 6.—"Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

THE angel here appeals to the *senses* of those who stand about the tomb to attest the truth of Christ's actual resurrection from the dead.

I. The empty tomb at once proclaimed the actual resurrection of the Saviour. The Resurrection is proclaimed to be a fact—(1) by the testimony of human witnesses. The disciples were men of probity, and had no worldly advantage to acquire from the publication of such a circumstance, but quite the opposite. They had known Christ, surely, long enough to recognize Him again when He appeared amongst them; and with one concurrent voice they testify, "He is risen from the dead." (2) This is strengthened by the testimony of angels, and by their various appearances as bearers of the news. (3) The resurrection of Christ was not denied, even by His enemies, but was covertly recognized and admitted, even while the Jews agreed to a traditional falsehood to conceal from their posterity that which they knew to be a fact. (4) The Apostles constantly attested the fact, as also did the Fathers of the primitive Christian Church—Ignatius, Polycarp, and the other venerable custodians of the truth. (5) Christ rose, likewise, in precise accordance with Scriptural types and predictions, and with the same body as that in which He had lived and died.

II. The language of the text expresses the great humiliation of Jesus Christ. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

III. We cannot meditate beside the place where the Lord lay without learning something of the infinite love of God.

IV. Neither can we look upon His empty tomb without being convinced of the Divine faithfulness—faithfulness as to promises, types, shadows, and predictions.

V. This visit to the place where the Lord lay must bring with it, too, a striking evidence of His Divine sovereignty. "I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again." And if He thus held in His sovereign hand the issues and the destinies of His own career, He can, in like manner, overrule and control the destinies of His people.

VI. Is not this vacant tomb an almost satirical evidence of His triumph over His enemies and ours?

VII. Lastly, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," that you may behold in it the certain and the glorious pledge of a perfected salvation.

A. MURSELL, *Calls to the Cross*, p. 286.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 6 (with 1 Cor. xv., ver. 44).—"He is not here: for He is risen, even as He said."

THE Resurrection from the Dead.

We still assert, in words, a literal resurrection of the body, but none of us believe it. Our hymns, our prayers, our epitaphs, and too often our sermons, imply that the dust of our bodies shall be reanimated in some far-off future, and joined to the waiting soul. At the same time, we know that science declares it to be impossible; our reason revolts from it; it is sustained by no analogy; it is an outworn and nearly discarded opinion. There is, however, a general feeling of perplexity in regard to it. The view now offered is substantially this: that the resurrection is from the dead, and not from the grave; that it takes place at death; that it is general in the sense of universal; that the spiritual body, or the basis of the spiritual body, already exists, and that this is the body that is raised up, God giving it such an outward form as pleaseth Him, and thus preserving that dualistic state essential to consciousness, if not to existence itself. Let us notice some considerations that render these views probable.

I. The butterfly gains its perfect form, not by assimilating the worm, but by getting rid of it. It is the most beautiful analogy in nature, its very gospel upon the resurrection—at first a creeping thing, dull and earth-bound, a slight period of dormancy, and then a winged creature floating upon the air

and feeding upon flowers, one life, yet possessing from the first the potency of two forms.

II. The entire significance and value of the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead centre in the fact that it sets forth human identity. The question now arises, in what does identity consist? Identity does not lie in matter, nor is it dependent upon matter. Man is not the matter that makes up the perpetual flux known as the human frame; he is nothing that the chemist can put test to. He must be something, not material, that endures, on which the shifting phenomena of animal life play themselves off. The body is not the man, and it is the man who is raised up. He goes into the other world simply unclothed of flesh, there to take on an environing body suited to his new conditions. As here we have a body adapted to gravitation, and time, and space, so doubtless it will be hereafter; the spirit will build about itself a body such as its new conditions demand.

T. T. MUNGER, *The Freedom of Faith*, p. 295.

REFERENCES: xxviii. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., No. 18; vol. xviii., No. 1,081; J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 523; D. Rose, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 321; G. W. McCree, *Ibid.*, vol. xxix., p. 314; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 214; vol. x., p. 117; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. i., p. 313; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 562; Armitage, *American Pulpit of the Day*, vol. i., p. 251. xxviii. 7.—S. A. Tipple, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 24; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xix., p. 52.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 8.—"And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy."

I. THE false message which brought sin into the world, and all our woe, was given first to woman, and by her was communicated to the man. The Resurrection of the Lord, the healing of that early death-wound, was communicated in the same way. From an angel to woman, and from woman to man, and from man to the world came death. From an evil angel, through the link of woman to mankind, the evil tidings spread and covered the earth. From a good angel to woman, and from women to men, and from men to the world came life, the life of the world.

II. It is not much preaching we get from angels' lips; but there is a little here, and that little very precious. The commission he brought and laid on the two Marys was, "Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead;" and in order to prepare them for obeying, he said first, "Fear not ye." The angel gave their spirits the cordial before he

imposed the race upon their limbs. Besides exhorting them not to fear, he gave them ground to bear their joy: "The Lord is not here; He is risen." The angel knew his part well, for the whole theory of missions is here. To invite the messenger first near, that himself may know that the Lord is risen, and his own soul rejoice in the living Saviour—this it is that will qualify him for going quickly to bring word to the disciples, or to the world, of the Resurrection of Christ.

III. "They did run to bring the disciples word." It was the word within them that impelled them to hasten; it was the word in their heart that made them run with the word on their lips. I detect a grand key-note here. It is not only the message, carefully learned and correctly told; it is not only the faithful witness-bearing, whatever danger may be incurred. Over and above all this there are an eagerness, an enthusiasm, and a haste, in bearing the message of redemption, which are in keeping with the case, and mark the conduct of true disciples in all places and at all times. "The King's business requireth haste." This is strictly natural; it is a universal law. All great tidings travel quickly, whether they be glad or grievous. Here the tidings were very great; they were charged with life from the dead for the world; it was an instinct irrepressible in those who knew them to break into a run, in order to tell them soon to those whom they concerned.

W. ARNOT, *The Anchor of the Soul*, p. 157.

REFERENCES: xxviii. 8-20.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 340. xxviii. 9, 10.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 56; H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 4th series, p. 105.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 10.—"There shall they see Me."

IT is very probable that there was some far deeper reason than we can now discover why Galilee should have been marked out to have, as it had, a special connection with the events of Eastertide.

I. The first thought which suggests itself is that Jerusalem, "the hill of Zion," which was once the "joy of the whole earth," and which the Lord Himself had loved, had rejected and crucified the Son of God, and in consequence of her apostasy was no longer the chosen home of God on earth. She was cast off, and her house was left unto her desolate. And in consequence thereof the risen Saviour was about to lead away His Apostles from the once holy city to the borders of the Gentiles, to whom the offer of salvation through Him was now to be made.

II. Why were the Apostles to meet their risen Lord in Galilee? Was it for the same cause that in Jerusalem He appeared only to the faithful few, and that, for the most part, when the doors were closed at night? Or was it for the totally opposite reason, that by fixing a set time, and the place where He was most known, He took the best course to set the fact of His resurrection beyond dispute? Or was it because He could best unfold the mysteries of His kingdom, and give His last instructions to His followers before He ascended to His Father, in a place of safety, in the quiet of the fields, or upon the sea, of Galilee? We cannot speak positively; but the lesson is that, not at once, not until some trial of faith and patient waiting had been gone through, was that privilege bestowed, of closest communion with the Master and His servants, of which Galilee was to be the scene. In proportion to our faith in Christ and love for Him shall we have need of patience too. The Apostles were constrained to wait, and so must we. They must go to Galilee, "and there," said the promise, "ye shall see Him." We must work our way to a better country, that is a heavenly; and thither, says the promise, "I go to prepare a place for you." Surely, what the thought of Galilee was to the Apostles is that of heaven to them that love the Lord Jesus—now the looked-for place of meeting, where the tears of past sorrows shall be dried, hope turned into fruition, love and knowledge perfected, and communion made "complete in Him." Scattered, like sheep which had fled from their shepherd, were the Apostles, till the mountain in Galilee was pointed out as the place where they with each other, and all with their Lord, were to meet once more. And so heaven is that better Galilee where they who are now dispersed and parted may meet again.

F. E. PAGET, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. i., p. 187.

Chap. xxviii., vers. 11-15.—"Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done," etc.

THE Chief Priests' Story.

This tale of the high priests', if it be good for anything, will bear the same cross-examination and analysis as others in the annals of important jurisprudence, and candour is compelled instantly to admit it labours under serious embarrassments.

I. In the very outset, the antecedent improbability of particulars crushes it. How came a trained watch all to go

to sleep? Would the whole band of sixteen men be likely to fall away at once, and remain in slumber a time long enough for this amount of labour? This was noisy work, and took some numbers to do it, yet it would have to be done leisurely. Who folded up the napkin and arranged the grave-clothes in the dark? And if the Roman soldiers were asleep, how did they know anything about it?

II. The immediate followers of Jesus had no motive to steal the body of their Lord.

III. It is evident from the entire story, told here in its artless naturalness, that the disciples had no sort of concerted plan to do any such thing. Why, they had His body in their power after Joseph begged it on Friday evening; now was it possible that the idea should strike them to go and pilfer it away on Saturday?

IV. The Jews never told this tale to any judicial audience or court, so that it could be subjected to cross-examination. Stealing the body was a capital crime, yet not one of these accused disciples was ever arrested for its commission. To have proved this story of theft in the night would have overturned the entire Christian religion in one sweep. But after this first lie in Jerusalem the Sanhedrim preserved a discreet silence.

V. There was awful risk to the soldiers if this story was true, but if the story was *not* true there was no peril in it.

VI. The inherent impossibility of the act itself cannot be left out of sight. If there was one spot more than another likely to be under malevolent and curious scrutiny, it was that where the Nazarene Prophet was laid. Any suspicious movement would have been observed by a score of eyes.

VII. Then what could be done with the body after the disciples had got it in possession? In that land, where such strict regulations existed, where every one shunned contact because of a ceremonial uncleanness, how could those frightened Galileans have relieved themselves of a burden so awkward after they had passed the precincts of the garden? If discovered, what was there so fatal to their faith, as well as to themselves, as this half-buried body of the crucified Nazarene?

C. S. ROBINSON, *Sermons on Neglected Texts*, p. 100.

REFERENCES: xxviii. 11-15.—E. D. Solomon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 293. xxviii. 11-20.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 276. xxviii. 16.—A. Raleigh, *From Dawn to the Perfect Day*, p. 230. xxviii. 16, 17.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 493.

Chap. xxviii., vers. 16-20 (with 1 Cor. xv., ver. 6).

THE question meets us to-day, as we think of the narrative of the text, How do *we* stand related to that assembly on the Galilean mountain, and to that last command of our adored Lord? The answer which I trust we shall all feel disposed to give is this, that we are related to that assembly just as though we had formed part of it, to that last command as though we had heard it in audible words from the lips of our Lord. That we may be confirmed in this conviction let us ask and answer some further questions.

I. Is the world's need any less now than it was then? Substantially, it is the same. It was great and urgent then; it is great and urgent now. "Go ye, therefore," into the busy world immediately around you, and into the wider world beyond, with the good news of God. Tell men that God loves them, that Christ "is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him." Such is the great commission, the most important ever entrusted to men. Note (1) its universality, (2) its intellectual character, (3) its gentleness.

II. Are the encouragements given to those who put themselves instantly in a way of obedience to this last command in any manner or degree less than they were at first or through the primitive ages? Christ's assertions regarding His power and presence were immediately put to the proof by His followers, and in no long time they were able to point rejoicingly to certain definite results, not only in the inward experiences, but in the lives and characters of men. The most marvellous changes took place, such as had never been obtained under any other teaching or influence whatever. In a state of society like ours, which has long been under more or less of the general Christian culture, we cannot expect to see many changes so visibly striking as those of early times. But those who will look below the surface of things will see that changes the same in essence are being produced, that the same sanctifying grace is still at work. When men go forth and teach the true Gospel in the spirit of love and loyalty, the Lord works with them, and confirms the word by signs following. It is a great work, so great that no other can be likened to it; all other good works are only parts of it. It will be a long and hard work, but it will be done. As surely as God is the Father, and Jesus Christ the Son, there will be "glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will toward men."

A. RALEIGH, *From Dawn to the Perfect Day*, p. 230.

REFERENCES: xxviii. 16.—A. Barry, *Cheltenham College Sermons*,

p. 383. xxviii. 16-20.—B. F. Westcott, *The Revelation of the Risen Lord*, p. 155. xxviii. 17.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 9th series, p. 167.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 17.—"But some doubted."

I. Doubting in matters of religion. Doubt arises (1) from ignorance; (2) some kinds of doubt mark the course of inquiry; (3) other kinds indicate moral perversity, and are allied to unbelief.

II. The practical influence of doubting in matters of religion. (1) It is no apology for indifference; (2) it ought to stimulate inquiry; (3) it contains an element of belief; (4) it may be an ultimate benefit.

G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines of Sermons*, p. 253

Chap. xxviii., ver. 18.—"All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth."

Our Lord's words here are full of Divine mystery; they possess heavenly massiveness and grandeur, and yet they are full of peace, consolation, and hope to every Christ-loving heart.

I. The words are majestic and gracious; they are also comprehensive in their simplicity and brevity. Here is the mystery of the mediatorial kingdom—Christ, the God-Man, Lord of heaven and earth, to the glory of the Father. All power is given unto Him in heaven. He who descended is the same that ascended far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. The Son of man is on the throne of God, He who was born of the Virgin Mary, who took upon Himself the form of a servant, who by Himself purged our sins, who is at the right hand of the Father.

II. Jesus has all power in heaven, in order that the Church on earth should constantly and steadfastly look away from all that is human and temporal, and know of no other mediation, strength, guidance, and comfort but the power and love, the wisdom and faithfulness of her One only Master and Head. He is high, to be visible and accessible to the least of His disciples in the lowliest valley of his weakness and ignorance.

III. Behold Him, the Son of man, seated at the right hand of the Father, and in His majestic rest and peaceful dignity behold the perfect assurance of our acceptance and of our blessedness.

IV. Behold Jesus in heaven, and remember that in Him Divine omnipotence is united with the tender sympathy of

perfect humanity. He was made like unto His brethren in all things, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest.

V. Behold Jesus in heaven, to bless His people. His intercession is all-prevailing. The Father Himself loveth us, according to the merciful assurance of Him who, as the true Mediator, always reveals and magnifies the Father. But it is in and through Christ that the love of the Father rests on believers.

VI. Behold Jesus in heaven, and seek the things which are above. In Him are all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. From Him descend all healthful influences, all spiritual gifts, all quickening and renewing power, all true and everlasting consolation.

VII. Behold Jesus in heaven, and be of good comfort. He presents unto the Father all the petitions and thanksgivings, all the labours and sufferings, all the words and works of His people, and they are accepted and well-pleasing in His sight.

A. SAPHIR, *Christ and the Church*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: xxviii. 7.—S. A. Tipple, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 24; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xix., p. 52.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 18.

THE Omnipotence of Jesus on Earth.

The power of Jesus in heaven is revealed to us that we may know that to Him is also given all power on earth. He whom God hath highly exalted, who is the Lord of glory and the Prince of the kings of the earth, who is head over all things to the Church, and under Whose feet the Father hath put all things, rules and governs in silence and calm omnipotence, unknown and unrecognized by the world. All earthly events and historical movements, all triumphs of skill and knowledge, all discoveries of science and developments of human life are under His government and the power of his sceptre; all things are subservient to the great purpose of His death, and preparatory to His second Advent.

I. Jesus has power on earth to forgive sin. He who has entered into the Holy of Holies by His own blood is now before the Father, the advocate in righteousness of sinners who trust in Him. And He has power to forgive sin on earth, and the conscience is at peace, the heart that was heavy-laden is at rest. And Jesus exerts this power with tenderness, as gently as the light comes down from heaven, and as the dew falls

on the flowers of earth. We look upon Him, and we are healed.

II. Jesus has power to renew the heart, Jesus only. It is His dying love that melts the heart. While the wintry and keen blasts of the law make us wrap the cloak of self-righteousness and opposition to God more firmly round us, the Sun of righteousness, the mercy of God, moves us to lay aside our pride, our sin, our hatred and forgetfulness of God.

III. Jesus has power on earth to quicken the dead. It is His Divine prerogative to give life. Who but God can kill and make alive again? Jesus is not merely a teacher or prophet; He is not a restorer of law. It is not instruction merely or principally that we need. The Lord came that we might have life, not by His doctrine, nor by His example, but by His death the erring, lost sheep were saved and brought into the fold of peace.

IV. All power is given unto Jesus on earth to keep His people in faith and love amidst all their temptations and afflictions, conflicts and struggles, giving them the victory over their enemies, and presenting them finally unblamable in body, soul, and spirit before the Father. The Good Shepherd, whose own the sheep are, by the election of the Father, by the self-sacrifice of His infinite love, by the indwelling and sealing of the Holy Ghost, keeps His people to the end. He guards them, and protects the new and tender life against the hostile and adverse influences by which it is surrounded. In heaven He is continually inteceding on our behalf, that our faith fail not; on earth He is continually shielding us with the power of His love, and keeping us by the influence of His Spirit.

A. SAPHIR, *Christ and the Church*, p. 17.

REFERENCES: xxviii. 18.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 100; G. T. Coster, *Ibid.*, vol. xvi., p. 108; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 143; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. vi., p. 276. xxviii. 18, 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 383; B. Bird, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 241. xxviii. 18-20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1,200; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 140; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 266; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 536.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 19.

THE Trinal Unity of the Godhead.

Consider—I. The doctrine of the Trinity as it appears to have been part of the earliest revelations which were given to the world. Though not revealed distinctly and dogmatically, the

doctrine of the Holy Trinity is conveyed in the Old Testament by implication and inference. Thus, the very first sentence in the Book of Genesis runs, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." That which is implied, though it cannot be shown in the translation, is that while the Agent is plural in this passage, the verb with which it is connected is in the singular number. And this strange form of expression is used by Moses about five hundred times, when speaking of God, and it is so used by none else. And Jewish writers confess that this frequently recurring phrase is indicative of some mystery in the Divine Being, though they do not attempt to define its nature. But the Jews are not our only witnesses to the fact of this great doctrine being a part of God's earliest communications to the human family. The truth, in some disguised and distorted form, will be found to have entered into almost all the fabulous theologies of the world, and this the more distinctly the more remote their antiquity.

II. The doctrine of the Trinity forms the subject of controversy in the earliest ages of the Christian Church.

III. To the humble Christian this doctrine is embraced for the peace and salvation of his soul; to him the mystery of the doctrine is nothing; He asks only, Have I sufficient evidence of the fact? and he feels that he has. In all its searchless mystery the doctrine of Three Persons sharing equally and alike the attributes of underived and inherent Godhead, and yet these Three all One in nature, One in essence, One in purpose, and mind, and will, is the only doctrine which meets the necessities of our lapsed race, or provides for our being brought back to a state of innocence and peace.

D. MOORE, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3,138.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 19.—"Teach all nations."

THE Catholic and Spiritual Character of the Church

I. Note the universality of this command of Christ—"all nations." When Jesus was on earth He did not go to all nations, but confined His ministry to Israel. It was according to the Divine purpose, according to the method of God's dealings with Israel and the nations, that Jesus should first go to His own people, preaching to them the Gospel of the kingdom, and endeavouring to gather them under the wings of His mercy and holy love. He was Israel's Messiah and King. The Angel of the Covenant came to His temple. But Israel itself was chosen in Him for the salvation of the world.

And even during His earthly ministry in Israel, Jesus thought with joy and love of the Gentiles, who should come to the light and enter the fold of Divine peace. And now the time had come. The Gospel of salvation was to be preached to the whole world. The rejection of Israel's Messiah results in a twofold dispensation. In judgment the Jews are scattered among all the nations of the earth; in love and mercy, in blessing, the Church is sent to all peoples and tongues. The Bible, and the Bible only, teaches firmly and clearly the unity of the human race. (1) As we are the children of Adam, all human beings are equal, created in the image of God, forming one family of mankind, called to light, and holiness, and blessedness. As all truths, this great truth is confirmed and illustrated by the Lord Jesus Christ. (2) This equality is, alas, also an equality in sin and in condemnation! (3) The unity of the race is a blessed fact, when we remember that the Son of God became man. Unto the whole race Christ is sent; He is given unto man as man, a new Centre to the whole family of mankind.

II. The spiritual character of this commission—"teaching them." Men are to be taught. The Word is the sword of the Spirit. By the Word the heart is conquered, and the Word is the bread which nourishes and strengthens the soul. Thus it always was with God's people. There is no book like Scripture in which men are so constantly exhorted to think, to consider, to reason, to learn, to meditate, to remember. There is no book so opposed to all blind obedience and assumption of external authority. There is no book so opposed to the pride and selfishness of an esoteric school, keeping the people in subjection and partial ignorance. The Church is where the Word of God is. We need nothing else but the word, in order to be men of God, perfect, thoroughly "furnished unto all good works." And as the inward life and growth of the Church are by the Word, so are her extension and influence. The great commission of the Church is to preach the Gospel to the world.

A. SAPHIR, *Christ and the Church*, p. 37.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 19.—"Teach all nations."

HEATHENISM.

The text brings before us the subject of heathenism, and the relation of the Church of Christ to the heathen world. The

words of our Lord are our authority as well as our encouragement for engaging in the great work of heathen missions. He Himself is the Sender. It is a work which is essential; it is, in one aspect, and if we take a wide enough view of its meaning, the work of the Christian Church.

I. With regard to the times of ignorance, there are three elements which modify the dense darkness which covers the earth. (1) There is the reminiscence of the primeval revelation. (2) The second element, which in some degree alleviates the great oppressiveness and gloom of men's ignorance, is that, as Sophocles expressed it, "there are the unwritten laws of Heaven in the hearts of men, which are not of to-day or yesterday, whose birth-tide is not known to any man." (3) The third element is this, that God, by the Holy Spirit, who bloweth where He listeth, had His work among the Gentile nations (Melchizedek, Job, the men of Nineveh).

II. We must not regard the judgments that are denounced in Scripture against heathenism and the nations that forget God as unjust and hard. Nothing in the Bible is harsh and severe. The light in which heathenism is revealed in Scripture, although it is truthful, is also affectionate. Whatever there is pure, and lovely, and ideal among the heathen nations, think not that it is our interest, or that it is the spirit of Christianity and Scripture, to ignore it or make little of it. God is the God of all, and there is nothing good or beautiful but it has its origin in God's Spirit.

III. When we think of heathenism we are overwhelmed and appalled. Think of its antiquity. Think of the extent of its territory. Think of the wonderful minds which have been captivated and enslaved by heathenism. Think of the evil of idolatry. Idolatry is not one evil; it is not a great evil; you cannot even call it the greatest evil: it is *the* evil; it is the mother of all evils; it is the root of all evil. Think of the wretchedness and misery of the heathen. It is a very superficial view of antiquity when people talk of the bright days of sunshine and joy in ancient Hellas. There were brightness and beauty; that people were gifted with a marvellous sense of the beautiful; but those who are well acquainted with antiquity know the deep-seated melancholy, the gloom, the cloud of darkness, which was only temporarily and superficially dispersed. Above all, let us remember the only antidote of idolatry; it is to "know God, and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent."

A. SAPHIR, *Christ and the Church*, p. 208.

REFERENCES: xxviii. 19.—J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, p. 343; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 104; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 174; W. Cunningham, *Sermons*, p. 89; J. Oswald Dykes, *Sermons*, p. 128.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 19.—"Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

THIS passage has always been regarded by the Church of Christ as teaching most clearly the doctrine of the Trinity. "Name" is never used in Scripture in connection with abstract things or qualities, but always with persons. As the personality, so the Divinity, and consequently the equality of the Three are distinctly set forth; for the name of the Son and of the Spirit are co-ordinated with that of the Father; the same faith is demanded of us in regard to each of the Three Persons. The solemnity of the moment when these words were spoken by our Lord, the character of the ordinance with which He connects them, clearly prove that they contain the cardinal and fundamental doctrine on which all Christian teaching and life rest.

I. In this doctrine there is light for the mind. God dwelleth no longer in darkness, and in heights unattainable to the vision of human hearts. We see Jesus, the God-Man, and He reveals the Father and the Spirit. Jesus, by the name of God, reveals to us creation, for by Him, the Word of God, were all things made; and by the Spirit the Father's purpose and the mediation of the Son were actually accomplished in perfection and beauty. Jesus, by the name of God, reveals to us in eternity, not a lonely, quiescent God, such as neither mind can conceive nor affection grasp, but a God in whom from all eternity there was fulness of life, and love, and blessedness, the Father loving the Son, and the Spirit knowing the depths of the Godhead.

II. Here the conscience finds rest. Only in a Triune God are perfect atonement and reconciliation. He who brings us to the Father is the Son. The Church was purchased with the blood of Him who is God; and when Christ, by His own blood, entered into the Holy of Holies, we were represented by Him and complete in Him. The work of the Holy Ghost, also, is essential to our peace. Christ is ours only by the power of the Holy Ghost. Without the love of the Father, the atonement of the Son, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost the conscience may be soothed, but cannot be set at rest and purified.

III. And here, in the mystery of the Triune name, is love for the heart. It is only when we know the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that we know that God is Love; that love is not one of His attributes merely, but that He is Love from everlasting to everlasting; that from all eternity God, who lives, loves; that in Him—the one Godhead, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—are united in ever-blessed communion of love.

A. SAPHIR, *Christ and the Church*, p. 67.

THE name of God, the glory of the Old and of the New Covenant. In the Divine revelation to Israel, from Abraham to the Exodus, and from Moses to the last prophets, we can trace the following lines of education, which all converge in the Advent of the Lord Jesus, and in his full revelation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

I. Scripture teaches us that no man can see God, and Scripture speaks at the same time of God appearing. Israel knew God as Jehovah revealing Himself, the Messenger or Angel, sent by God and one with God, His Representative, face and image, in whom Divine glory was manifest, and to whom Divine adoration is due.

II. But while God came thus nigh unto them, He revealed the infinite distance which separated between Him and the sinful nation. Israel is sinful and guilty, yet God dwells among them. Israel hopes in the Lord, for with Him is plenteous redemption. For they knew that God, the holy and just Lawgiver, was also God the Redeemer. A just God and a Saviour, a holy God and a sanctifying Spirit, were manifested unto Israel, or, in other words, the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

III. These two lines of prophecy are combined, in the hope of Jehovah's rending the heavens, and coming down to redeem and glorify Israel. The coming of the Lord God is the theme of Psalms and Prophets. The invisible God manifests the Holy One among a forgiven and renewed people; such is the hope of Israel.

IV. We must combine with these passages an apparently opposite line of prediction. Its starting-point is not the throne of holiness, but the earth under a curse, and the woman, who was first in the transgression. This series of promises is familiar to all. The Seed, the Son, the David, the Servant, the Israel is the Redeemer, the Light of the nations, the Restorer and glory of His people. And as He is man, and born of the Virgin-daughter of Zion, He is also God. Israel was taught

that the Son of David, the Messiah, was God manifest in the flesh, Revealer of the Father, the Lord who can baptize with the Holy Ghost. Does not the Messianic prophecy declare the name of the Triune God?

V. This mysterious God-Man is seen in heaven and coming down from heaven (Psalm cx. 1; Zech. xii. 10).

VI. The mystery of the Trinity is foreshadowed in the teaching of the Book of Proverbs. Who can fail to recognize the identity of the Wisdom spoken of in the Book of Proverbs, and the Word, who was in the beginning with God? Wisdom is set up from everlasting, brought forth; or as the Church expresses it, God of God, begotten, not made; beyond and above all creation; to be distinguished from God, and yet worshipped in the Godhead.

A. SAPHIR, *Christ and the Church*, p. 89.

Chap. xxviii., vers. 19, 20.

THE Uniting Name.

I. A set of Galilean fishermen were bidden to teach or make disciples of all nations. In some way or other these Galileans did make disciples among Jews, the worshippers of the I AM, the Jehovah; among Greeks, the worshippers of human heroes and the forms of nature. Consider what was necessary to bring these two portions of the world into a common fellowship. Those words which He spoke as He stood on the mount, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth," were indeed most necessary before they could believe that power would descend on them to execute His command. Only if He had reconciled earth and heaven, only if He had conquered the visible as well as the invisible world, only if both were gathered up in Him, could they have the credentials or the inner might which were needed for heralds to the nations. "Go ye *therefore*," was the natural sequence to this assurance. But it was not enough. They were messengers from God to men, as he was who had seen the vision in the burning mount. They had as much necessity to ask as Moses had, "Behold, when we come unto them, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent us unto you, and they shall say to us, What is His name? what shall we say unto them?" The answer was given before the question had arisen, "Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

II. The name, the new and awful name, was proclaimed.

But it was not merely proclaimed. The nations were not merely to be told, "It is this Being whom henceforth you are to worship; to this name the names of the Delphic Apollo and the Jove of the Capitol must bow." Go ye, it was said, and baptize all nations into this name. Speak not of it as if it stood aloof from them, as if it were afar off them. This mystery is about them, embracing them, sustaining them. The more we study this history, the more we shall be convinced that the preaching of this name and the baptism into this name were the mighty powers by which the divided worship, the demon worship of the old world was overthrown. And this because it was felt that there was one inclusive Truth revealed to mankind; a Truth which we cannot comprehend, but which comprehends us; a living Truth, which speaks itself out in a Person, not in a proposition; a Truth into which we must be received, and which will then go with us through life and death, meeting us in every new stage of our education, interpreting itself to us by our own individual trials, and by all the trials through which the world, or any section of it, is appointed to pass, bringing within its circle the sage and the little child.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 33.

THE Church and the World.

As Christ was sent by the Father, so is the Church sent by Christ. Jesus was sent to be the Revelation and Representative of the Father, to testify of Him, to declare Him, to do His will, and to finish His work. He was a true and faithful Witness; He was the perfect Servant, whose meat it was to do the Father's will; He declared the name of God, and finished the work. Now Christ sends us into the world that we may show forth His life, that we may be His witnesses, that His light and love may shine, attract, and bless men through us, that men may behold in us Christ, as they beheld the Father in Him. As Christ was, so are we in the world. The Church is in the world. The reason is threefold: (1) the glory of God; (2) that she may follow Jesus, who through suffering entered into glory; (3) to promote the conversion of sinners. "From the life of Jesus," said the old Germans, "we can learn all things;" we can learn Christ, and to know Him is to know all things that pertain unto life and godliness. Let us, then, continually study Him as the Model; we must represent Christ in our lives.

I. And first, let us remember the object of Christ's life. He

was sent. He never forgot that He came not to do His own will, but the will of the Father that sent Him. Thus He was constantly the Servant of God, the Representative of the Father. Now we are sent by Jesus, and all that we are and have, all our words and works, are to be viewed in the light of mission and service.

II. Jesus came in lowliness. His birth, infancy, childhood, and youth are characterized by the emblems of poverty and obscure humility. What are we to learn from this? Are we not to follow the Master? We may not be poor, but we are to love poverty. We ought not to trust in earthly riches and honour, in the things which the world esteems and pursues; we ought to remember that our influence and our power are spiritual, and that the garment of the true Church is that of a servant, of a stranger and pilgrim.

III. Jesus was the Son of God; He came from above. Thus the Church is born of God, of incorruptible seed. Her life is none other than the life of Christ, the risen Head, the life of the Spirit, who dwelleth in us. We exert influence and power in the world simply by our being blameless and harmless, the sons of God, living Christ's life, manifesting the Divine nature, of which we are partakers who have escaped the corruption of the world through lust. In this lowliness and in this power the Church is able to go to the whole world with love and sympathy, announcing substance in the midst of emptiness and vain shadows, eternal life in the midst of death and sorrow, peace to the heavy-laden conscience, love to the aching and thirsting heart, forgiveness and renewal, health and joy, to the wounded and contrite.

A. Saphir, *Christ and the Church*, p. 160.

The history of the Apostolic Church is the guide-book of the Church of every age. The Holy Ghost has not given us a record of the subsequent history of Christ's people, and we are convinced that the description of the Apostolic Church given to us by the Spirit is all that we need for our instruction and encouragement. What, then, were the characteristic features of the Apostolic Church?

I. We read that the Pentecostal congregation of Jerusalem continued steadfast in the Apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Deeply rooted and grounded in the knowledge and love of Christ, they cast forth their roots as Lebanon, their branches spread extensively; there

were continually added to their number true believers. The Church spreads when she is intense in her spiritual life; she spreads when she deepens; she expands by concentration.

II. We are told that the Church of Jerusalem was regarded by the people with awe and with favour. This shows that the Church manifested both the holiness and love of God.

III. The Apostolic Church was full of joy and peace in believing, by the power of the Holy Ghost. The reality of Apostolic faith explains their joyousness and their heavenly-mindedness. The Apostolic Christians believed, they trusted in Jesus; and they rejoiced in Him who was their loving Redeemer, and who was coming again to give them the kingdom.

IV. The Apostolic Church was the home of love. Jesus was their Centre. In Him they were one. Where Christ's Spirit is, there love dwells and reigns. Love rooted in the heart, strong, sweet, and tender; love in deed and in truth, manifesting itself in the words of consolation, counsel, and encouragement, all the deeds of help and self-sacrifice.

V. The Church of Christ in the Apostolic times was organized. While there is no intervening priesthood or mediation between earth and heaven, the Lord Jesus blesses, feeds, and rules the flock through the *ministry* of believers, chosen and set apart for this solemn work. The object of the ministry is the ingathering of souls, and the edifying of the Body of Christ. The permanence of the ministry comprises the whole dispensation. The existence of the ministry promotes and strengthens the unity and equality of believers.

A. SAPHIR, *Christ and the Church*, p. 190.

REFERENCES: xxviii. 19, 20.—D. Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 198; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xix., pp. 79, 81; G. E. L. COTTON, *Sermons to English Congregations in India*, p. 114.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 20.

THE assurance was not given—it could not have been given with effect—until the Divine Speaker had certified His followers by many infallible proofs that it should be even as He said. Had the Ascension followed immediately upon the Resurrection—had there been no manifestation of the risen life of Christ to the Church, no drying of the Magdalen's tear, no satisfaction of the doubts of Thomas, no breaking bread with the friends at Emmaus, no meeting with the fishers by the shore of Tiberias—the promise would hafailed of have If its potency; the "Lo,

I am with you," in that case, must have been, "Believe me, I shall be with you;" and though faith might have accepted the dogma of the Resurrection, love could hardly have appropriated the risen Christ. There are some art-creations which owe their influence upon us less to the beauty of detail than to the finishing-touch of the artist's hand. One streak of light on the canvas communicates to the whole an indefinable expression, which enthralls us as we gaze. Something analogous is the effect of the last touch added by the inspired penman in the text to the completed portrait of the Saviour's life. The image of Christ is felt to be no longer a thing external to us. Risen and ascended, He dwells in us, and we in Him. If the Church be indeed the body of her Lord, it must be that the principles of His life will be found to lie at the root of her own, and to contain within them, likewise, the promise and potency of the life to come.

I. We continually profess our belief in the Holy Catholic Church; what is it that we believe? The question is no simple one, for the Church, though one body, is diverse in function and in form, and men's thoughts vary widely in respect to the essentials of her life according as they are most attracted to this or that feature of the complex whole. The Church of Christ cannot be definitely measured by human language, any more than she can be compassed in her completeness by human eye. Men go about her, and think to tell her towers and mark her bulwarks, but her foundations are in the Rock which none may scan. Her limits extend beyond the bounds of space. She is no city of material build, but a polity of living spirits whose sustenance is derived from invisible sources. Her franchise is the heavenly citizenship. Her charter is hidden in the counsels of God. Let us, then, endeavour to forget the outward form she wears in this or that communion, and seek to rise to the height of those ideas of which she is designed to be the remembrancer. Briefly stated, her mission is this, "To declare a new fellowship among men, in consequence of the disclosure of a new relationship between man and God."

II. Christ came, it cannot be too often repeated, to reveal the Father. Not a man, but Man, the realization in One Person of all that man was created to be, so that while He represents us each to ourselves in idea as that which God would have us to be, His obedient children, He reveals God to us as that which He is in fact, a loving Father. From this revelation follows that of the universal brotherhood of man. These ideas are

hidden in the bosom of the Church of Christ. To these she owes her catholicity. "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more;" and in spite of all external divergence, in spite of priestly domination, in spite of the dogmatism of sects, the Church of Christ lives in the vitality of her ideas, casting off from age to age the imperfect systems in which man's error disguises them, appealing ever anew to the simplest trusts and aspirations of his heart, and beckoning him onwards continually to an ultimate union of manifold Divinity at the feet of his Father in heaven. The true progress of the race, it has been said, is hidden in the thoughts of Christ; and though Churches may prove unfaithful, these cannot die. A Church whose theology tacitly puts limits upon the love of God to man, whose authority restrains men from searching diligently into the Word and works of God, whose system bars the free access of man's spirit to the Father of all, whose hierarchy exalt their privilege of ministry into a right of lordship—such a Church contains within itself the seeds of disunion and decay; it is untrue to the catholic ideal; it has lost the spirit of the Master. But the Church which remembers that it is constituted on Divine promises, and endowed with spiritual privileges in order to make known to men their new relationship to God, and furnish them with help to realize the duties which that relationship implies—such a Church bears true witness to Christ; it is a living part of His body, and will necessarily become, through its own vitality, a centre of union.

E. M. YOUNG, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, April 27th, 1876.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 20.—"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

THE New Obedience.

I. There is a twofold element in the law—condemnation and the promise, type and instalment of redemption. Both elements were given in love; in both the purpose was one of mercy. But when the primary object of the law had failed, when men remained proud, self-satisfied, cherishing and excusing sin without humility and repentance, men failed also to see and enjoy the comfort of this promise, the meaning and substance of the type. Thus they who walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless were the very Israelites who waited for the redemption in Jerusalem; they honoured the law, and therefore longed for the Gospel.

II. Christ is come; and now, instead of condemnation, behold grace; instead of shadow and type, behold perfection and fulfilment, that is truth. And (1) let us remember that in Christ only the law of God found its realization and fulfilment. It had hitherto been only an idea seeking embodiment, a problem awaiting its solution, an outline looking for substance and life. Jesus, with the eyes of His heart, saw the law in its breadth and depth; He joyfully filled the entire outline; His willing mind, His loving heart, His filial spirit entered into the whole mind of God, and penetrated to the depth and substance of God's Word. (2) All men are under the law, till through the death of Christ they are freed from it. Christ is, to us who believe, the end of the law for righteousness. The law condemns; the Gospel brings deliverance and salvation. The law could not give life; it could not minister unto us the Holy Ghost. Christ hath quickened us, and by His Spirit dwells in our hearts, and therefore we are able to love. Love is the fulfilment of the law. And as the law could not attain it, so the love which our Lord gives us is something higher and deeper than the law demanded or foreshadowed. (3) The commandments of Christ may be summed up according to the various aspects of the inner and outer life. If we look at the heart, the source and root of life and action, all Christ's commandments are contained in His most touching appeal, "Abide in Me." If we look, again, at the manifestations of life, all Christ's commandments are summed up in His simple words, "Follow Me." If we look at our relation to God, prayer, meditation, and communion, Jesus' commandments may be summed up in one word—*in secret:* "Enter into thy closet, and shut the door." If we consider our relation to the world, the commandments of Christ are summed up in one word—*mission.* If we look, again, at the aim and purpose of our energies and lives, it is summed up in one word—*heaven:* "Set your affection on things that are above."

A. SAPHIR, *Christ and the Church*, p. 130.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 20.—"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

TRUTH, and its Questions To-Day.

I. We live in a time which is called a time of transition, when the old thoughts of men are contending in a sharp battle with the new—so sharp that the very outsiders and camp-followers of the armies of the world, the idle men and women, take an

interest and engage themselves therein in a desultory manner. *Men* and *ideas* astonish and confuse us. There is no certainty, it seems, in men. We become distrustful and indignant. But it is because we look to men too much, and have not faith in the Man Christ Jesus. It matters, after all, but little how men deceive us. We have one Leader who never disappoints, to whom truth is as dear now as it was to Him on earth, who encompasses our failure with His success, our weakness with His strength, our restlessness with His rest, and lo! He is with us always, even to the end of the world.

II. It may be, however, that other elements have come into our life which give us real reasons for dismay. There are times when a strange thing happens to us—when old evils, old temptations, which we thought we had conquered, which had died out of our lives, arise again, and we tremble with the thought that past effort has been in vain, that sins cannot have been forgiven, because they appear again. But there may be an explanation even of this. I cannot but think that it is not always a note of retrogression, but a note of growth. (1) First, it is not an experience which comes to unaspiring spirits; it belongs especially to those who are possessed with the desire to advance, to pass beyond the bounds of mortal thought, and find the fount of truth. (2) Again, this resurrection of evil things and thoughts may in itself be caused, not by any cessation of growth, but by the progress of growth itself. (3) Because we may redeem the past in Christ, let us go forward with the patience and effort of men. We will not despair while we are wise, nor let the soul, in utter faithlessness, commit the sin of Judas God is mightier than our evil, too loving for our sins. We shall be punished, but healed through our punishment. The phantom cloud of sins, errors, failures melts away in the growing light, and from the purity of the upper sky a voice seems to descend and enter our sobered heart: "My child, go forward, abiding in faith, hope, and love; for lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

S. A. Brooke, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 290.

The Perpetual Presence.

This is the Church's charter. By this instrument we hold our all. If this be true the gates of hell cannot prevail against us. If Christ, the crucified and the risen, is indeed and in truth present still, present for ever, with us who believe, then to be a Christian, a Christian all through and altogether, must be strength, and safety, and happiness, must be life, and glory, and

immortality, assured by the word of One who cannot lie, of One who, raised from death, dieth no more. What, then, we ask briefly, are some of the characteristics of this perpetual presence, in the Church and in the soul?

I. It is a special presence. There is a presence in the universe. In Christ all things consist: withdraw Him, and there is chaos. It is not of this presence that He speaks. There is a mind and will, there is a power and a work, inside the community which a man enters by believing, distinct from that which orders sky and sea, replenishes earth with life, and keeps the stars in their courses. This special presence is that which accounts for the very start, and progress, and success of Christianity.

II. It is a spiritual presence. "The Comforter," which is the Holy Ghost, once dwelt with, now He dwells in the Church. The corporeal presence is gone, that the spiritual may come. This presence has influences direct and constant, which are the life of the body. What would the Word be, the book or the voice, without the presence? What would the sacraments be, the water or the supper, without the presence? It is the presence which changes idle sounds, bare materials, fleeting wishes into realities, into instrumentalities, into very powers of a world to come.

III. It is a manifold presence. Every gift and every grace are due to it. Every office and every function of the universal Church are due to it. Not action only, but counteraction; not institution only, but adaptation; not formation only, but reparation—these, too, are parts of it.

IV. Above all else, it is a sanctifying presence. Men may cavil at revelation, fight over doctrine, ask all their days, "What is truth?" there is one thing they dare not malign, and that is holiness. If the presence were protective only, keeping alive in the earth, as a "sign spoken against," a spiritual religion, offering happiness, offering heaven, on the condition of faith in a Saviour, it might attract the weary and sorrowful; it would not appeal, as now, to the conscience and heart of mankind. The presence is proved by its effect. It is a light, it is a power, it is a life, it is a love; men do know for themselves what is the secret of their life, and other men take knowledge of it whether it is powerful and whether it is pure. If Christ can transform a life, if Christ can comfort a death, then I may doubt about many things, but one thing I see, that this is indeed the Saviour I need.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *University Sermons*, p. 233.

THE Real Presence.

I. Jesus is with us as individuals. Here is our strength. Leaning on Christ our difficulties vanish. "Have not I commanded thee?" said God unto Joshua; "be strong, and be of good courage: be not afraid, neither be thou discouraged; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Jesus is with us (1) in the days of prosperity and joy, (2) in our affliction, (3) when the soul feels deserted and is cast down within us, (4) when we are slow of heart, and cannot believe that He is risen, and walk in sadness. If Jesus is with us, then (*a*) we have all things. His presence is our all. He Himself is our Life. All the activities of the Church are the manifestations of Christ; of Him is our fruit found. (*b*) We can do all things. Is He not our Lord and our Strength? Does He not fight all our battles? This is the secret of sanctification. Not merely a remembered Jesus, not merely the motive of gratitude or fear, but the present Jesus. In every temptation, in every duty, in every sorrow lean upon the Lord, who is with thee, and His grace will be sufficient. (*c*) This is the secret of our influence. If Jesus be with us, sinners will draw near to hear Him, into whose lips grace is poured. The presence of Jehovah in the midst of His people will awe and attract many. The presence of Jesus in our hearts and homes will manifest itself in our character and conduct, and Christ in us will draw many to Himself. (*d*) Heaven itself is begun, for to be with the Lord is eternal life and blessedness. Jesus shall throughout all eternity be our All. We depend and lean on Him throughout the endless ages.

II. The words of the Lord refer also and primarily to the whole Church. We who believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost believe also that there is the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints. Jesus ascended into heaven, but He has thereby not left earth and His disciples here below. He who dwells in the high and lofty place dwells also with him who is of a contrite and broken heart. Taken away from judgment and humiliation, He delights now in glory to remember His sorrows and temptations on earth, and to sympathize with the saints, whom He is not ashamed to call brethren. Wherever two or three are gathered together in His name He is in the midst of them; He is with every one who loves Him; He is with our spirit.

A. SAPHIR, *Christ and the Church*, p. 233.

THE ever-present Saviour.

These words of our Lord are like every other which He spoke after His Resurrection. All He said, and all He did, after He rose from the grave, was for believers only.

I. The word "alway," in the text, has perhaps rather lost the exactness of meaning which it carried at the time when our translation was made, and there is always a loss of power wherever there is a diminution of exactness. There is a great force and beauty in "all the days." It conveys at once the idea that before the mind of the speaker all the days lay ranged in order, to the last time that the sun shall ever set upon the earth. He saw each in its individuality, each with its own proper history. We are always stepping into an unknown future, but the foot cannot fall outside the presence of Jesus.

II. Most minds, whatever they be, do best in fellowship; very few are independent of the law of sympathy, and those few are the weakest. Now, conceive that you carry about with you, every day, the actual sense of the nearness, and the compassion, and the co-operation of Christ; conceive that you know that there is One at your right hand whose name is "Counsellor," to whom you can turn at any moment, and be sure of perfect direction; conceive that you are conscious of such an arm of strength that you can in your most burdened hour lean on it with all your weight: what a perfected existence would you be leading from that moment; what a path of light would stretch on before you, up to the realms of glory!

III. There is a presence, and if that presence be it must be the determining feature of every man's life, whether he have it or not. If you have it not there is a desideratum, and such a desideratum that I hesitate not to say that whatever you have beside, if you have not the feeling of the presence of Christ life is still to you a failure and a blank. But if you have it, and delight yourself in it, the more you make of it the more it will be to you. Let it be a fixed axiom of life, "Christ is with me everywhere." Do not measure it; do not treat it like the uncertainties of this little world. Time lays no hand upon it; no shade of altered feeling ever comes to darken it; no parting hour will ever sadden it with a last farewell; but from eternity to eternity, again as yesterday, so to-day, as to-day, so to-morrow, and as to-morrow, so for ever and ever. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And let all the new creation cry, "Amen."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 345.

TRUTH, and its Hope of Progress.

I. "Lo, I am with you alway," was said by Representative Mankind to the mankind He represented. If Christ be with mankind as He is with Himself, present through and in the ages as their heart and brain, then He is the Source whence evolution flows. And because He is perfect, therefore the race evolves towards perfection, and evolution towards perfection is progress. It is impossible to bring forward one half of the proofs of such a progress; but one is enough. It is plain to those who read history more for the sake of human ideas than for its statistics that many of the ideas which restricted the equal freedom of men, which implicitly denied the two great universal ideas of Christianity,—that all men are alike God's children, that all men are brothers in Christ,—have been slowly dying away, and are now rapidly dying. In the decay of these progress is seen; in looking forward to their ruin is our best hope; in proving that their ruin is contained in Christianity is the reconciliation between the world and Christianity. We look forward, upon this "bank and shoal of time," to the destruction of all false conceptions of the relations of God to man and of man to man, to the hail which will sweep away the lingering remnants of every idea which limits, isolates, and tyrannizes over men. For the Redeemer is with us always, even to the end of the world.

II. But we must not expect that this will be done quickly or easily. Let no man or woman think, who is still young, on whom the necessary calm of age has not fallen, that they will have a quiet life, if they are in earnest, for many years to come, either in the world without or in the world within them. Development must have its rude shocks, evolution its transient earthquakes, progress its backslidings. Accept the necessity; count the cost; make ready to take your part in the things which are coming on the earth. See that you are an active part of the great evolution of the race. What matters, after all, the catastrophes, the convulsions of heart and intellect which you must suffer, the shattered sail, the midnight watch in the hurricane, the loneliness of the mid-ocean? It is life at least; it is more, it is moving with the movement of the world, and the world is moving in Christ.

S. A. BROOKE, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 305.

THE Presentiments of Youth.

I. Three things, catastrophe, joy, and change, to either or to

all of these we look forward in the hour of presentiment. We take them one by one; we ask if the forecasting of them has anything to tell us. And first, the presentiments of catastrophe, is there any good in them? (1) I think, when they are presentiments regarding others, that they make our life more delicate. They give a finer edge to noble passions. Love becomes clearer through the dream of loss, the joy of friendship more exquisite from our sense of its transiency. (2) But if the presentiment of catastrophe be for ourselves it ought to make our inner life more delicate—more delicate, inasmuch as there are so many pleasant and gracious possibilities in our own nature which we neglect to educate. We go through the meadows of our own hearts, crushing with a careless step the flowers. There is no need to walk so fast. Tread more delicately, more thoughtfully, lest when the catastrophe comes you find, too late, that you have not got the good out of your own nature which you might have done.

II. Are we ready for the progress which ought to grow out of joy? We look forward to joy, but there can be no progress got out of it if we seek to drain it dry in a moment. We need temperance in our delight. Some plunge their whole face into the rose of joy, and become drunk with the scent, but in doing so they crush their rose, and break it from its stem. The leaves wither, the colour dies, the freshness of the perfume fades; their pleasure is gone. The wise man prefers to keep his rose of joy upon its stem, to visit its beauty not all at once, but day by day, that he may have it cool and in the dew; and thus his pleasure possesses permanence.

III. Lastly, we look forward to change, sometimes with exultation, sometimes with dread; with the former in youth, with the latter in manhood. Middle age comes upon us, and we need a higher help than our own to meet the change and chance of mortal life. They must come, and the solemn question is, shall we be able to conquer their evil? have we Divine life enough in the spirit to make them into means of advance? For it is wise to remember that any change may be our overthrow. But stay; are we alone, unhelped, forgotten, feeble victims of blind Fate? Not so, if a triumphant Humanity has lived for us; not so, if these words have any value, "Lo, I am with you alway;" for then we are in Christ, and to be in Him is to be fated to progress passing into perfection; for we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

S. A. BROOKE, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 320.

I. In order to understand this somewhat remarkable statement we have to observe that the Saviour is speaking of something more than that presence which is inseparable from the nature of His own essential and eternal Godhead. Considered in His Godhead, the Lord Jesus Christ was present, of course, with His people before His incarnation, as well as after it; present after His Ascension, as well as before it; present, too, not only with the godly, but also with the ungodly, surrounding, enfolding, encompassing all. But in these consolatory words, addressed to the Apostles on parting from them, our Lord unquestionably refers to something which is not only more intimate and personal than the unavoidable proximity of the Creator to the creature, but which is also more closely associated with the human relation in which He had stood to them during the period of His earthly ministry. The "I" who is with us always is not only the exalted Christ, who sits on the throne, and sways the sceptre of the universe, but also the Friend and Counsellor, the gentle, tender, compassionate Companion, who trod with us step by step in the journey of life, and who condescended to admit us into the freest and fullest, into the most loving and satisfying intercourse with Himself.

II. The next point which we have to notice is the fact that communion with the Saviour is made possible by the advent of the Comforter; in other words, that the coming of the Spirit is, to all intents and purposes, a coming of the Saviour to the people who love Him. We know very little about the mysteries of the spiritual world, but what we do know will not make us unwilling to believe that there are modes of communication, of intercourse, of fellowship, between spirit and spirit, with which we are totally unacquainted, but which may be real and efficacious nevertheless; and if we believe this we shall not be disposed to deny that the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Ghost, can establish, if it so pleases Him, a communication of the most intimate kind between Himself and the spirits of Christian disciples. Christ is felt to have come, because the Spirit has brought Him.

III. Lastly, let us remember that this coming of Christ to His people, precious as it is, is suited to a state of imperfection and discipline. We look forward to something beyond that which we enjoy now. We look to another coming when Christ shall be manifested in bodily presence. This is the final, the exhaustive coming; there can be nothing beyond this. Then

we shall see Him as He is, "being changed into the likeness of His glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things even unto Himself."

G. CALTHROP, *Words Spoken to my Friends*, p. 305.

THE Friendship of the Living Christ.

It is evident that Christ meant this promise to express a truth of profound meaning and pre-eminent power for the men to whom He gave it; for it is a strange fact that He should, for the first time, promise to be with them always, at the very last moment before vanishing from the world, and we may be certain that words apparently so contradictory have a very deep significance. This promise, too, is the last that He gave them before sending them out as heralds of His kingdom. It is, therefore, in one sense, the sum and substance of all the consolations He had given them before; and we may be sure that this crowning message contains the elements of mighty power. Observe first and broadly, that the friendship of the living Christ is the grand aid to spiritual life. As the disciples needed the conviction that He was nearer to them when He had passed into the heavens than He had ever been while on earth, so until we reach that conviction we shall be unable to lead lives as earnest as theirs.

I. This friendship alone can mature the inner life of the soul. It is a deep and Divine law of our nature that fellowship develops the hidden powers in the spirit of man. We never know what we can do till we find a friend. There are within us sleeping capacities, great and beautiful, which never waken till then. A most mighty fact is this power of friendship, so that a man who has no friend is an enigma even to himself. In the deepest sense is this true of the inner life of the Christian.

II. This friendship alone can Christianize every action of man's life. The emphatic demand which God's Word makes of the Christian disciple is that he should be a Christian in everything. And this is a dream, an impossibility utter and final, unless we can realize the personal friendship of the present Christ.

III. This friendship alone can hallow the discipline of trouble. In this no mere creed-believing will do; no dead Christ is sufficient; nothing can help us but the perfect sympathy of a living Lord, who knows our sorrows, and who suffered for our sins.

IV. This friendship unites the present with the future world.

It unites us with Him "who was dead, but is alive for evermore," and by it we learn to "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth," for we walk with Christ as with a friend. Therefore, if you would make this life a dawning of the heavenly life and a schooling for its glorious offices, you must realize the present practical power of the words; "Lo, I am with you alway."

E. L. HULL, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 168.

CHRIST'S Promise.

I. In the Old Dispensation God deigned to abide visibly amongst His people when He did not abide in their hearts; and when the light and glory were departed from the mercy-seat men did not fondly insist upon it that they were still there, and that the glory of the second temple could not be less than that of the first temple; they saw and knew that it was less, and good men mourned for it, and comforted themselves with the word of prophecy, which told them that the glory of the second house should one day be greater than that of the former, because the Lord Himself with a more perfect manifestation of Himself should visit it. But when Christ was less present with His people under the New Dispensation, when the outward signs of His power were withdrawn, and falsehood and sin began to pollute His living temple, men did not open their eyes to see and acknowledge the change, but they closed them harder and harder, and went on repeating that Christ must be present, and that His Church must ever be possessed by His Spirit, when their own lie was driving His Spirit, which is the Spirit of truth, farther and farther from them, till not Christ, nor Christ's Spirit, but the very enemy of man himself, took his seat in the holy precinct, and called himself God, and was called so by those who worshipped him.

II. So it was, and again voices are busy in repeating the same falsehood, in talking loudly about holy times, and holy things, and holy places, saying that Christ is there. Oh, blessedness above all blessedness if indeed He were there! for then were the Church perfected. For so it is that when the most inland creek begins to feel the coming in of the tide, and the living water covers the blank waste of mud and gravel which was lying bare and dreary, then we know that the tide runs full and strong in the main river, and that the creek is but refreshed out of its abundance. But who will ever see the little inland creeks filled when the main river itself is so shallow that men can go over dry-shod? and who will ask the tide to fill these

remote and small corners in the first instance, as if they were to make up for the shallowness of the great river? Not through outward ordinances, even the holiest, does the Church become holy; but if it might once become holy by the presence of Christ's Holy Spirit in every heart, then its ordinances would indeed be holy also; we might say that Christ was in them then, and we should say so truly.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 287.

REFERENCES: xxviii. 20.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, No. 15; J. C. Hare, *The Victory of Faith*, p. 315; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., pp. 95, 173; J. T. Stannard, *Ibid.*, vol. xiv., p. 216; C. M. Short, *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv., p. 389; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 363; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 132; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 119; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 88; *New Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 29; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 183.

ST. MARK.

Chap. 1, ver. 1.—"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

I. The Gospel has had three beginnings, yet it is right to speak of each as the beginning. (1) The beginning as seen in the Divine counsels, when the Gospel was but a thought. (2) The beginning as seen in the Incarnation, when the Gospel became a person. (3) The beginning as seen in its believers, when the Gospel becomes a new creation.

II. One beginning of the Gospel is always introductory to another. It is so in the highest human thinking. There is first the thought, then the agent or representative, then the result. From Mark's preface we learn that there was (*a*) a prophecy, (*b*) a pioneer, (*c*) an introductory rite. The importance of this view is shown by two considerations. (1) It indicates the consistency and progressiveness of Divine revelation. (2) It supplies a test of the genuineness of professed revelation.

III. No beginning of the Gospel can be true and effectual except as it leads to a spiritual consummation. The prophets pointed to John; John pointed to Jesus; Jesus pointed to the Holy Ghost. This fact shows, (1) the transitoriness of all mere ceremony; (2) the uselessness of all mere knowledge; (3) the possibility of the highest fellowship with God. The subject addresses a lesson (1) to students. You have to deal with a harmonious and progressive revelation. In order to be wise master-builders you must grasp the revelation as a whole. You must know it in its proportions, analogies and tendencies; otherwise you might be sacrificing a principle to an accident, or exaggerating the ceremonial to the neglect of the spiritual. (2) To pioneers. A man only works well in proportion as he knows the measure of his power and the limit of his mission. When the frame-maker mistakes himself for the painter, art is degraded. It does not follow that because a man knows the alphabet he can write a book. (3) To Churches. Have you received the Holy Ghost? (4) To enquirers. There is nothing more to

come. You have had prophets, psalmists, lawgivers, Christ, and the dispensation of the Spirit. Why wait?

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 10.

I. CONSIDER the leading conception and object of St. Mark. Some notice of his main characteristics will throw some light upon these. (1) The main characteristic of this Evangelist is his vividness. (*a*) If St. Matthew loves to lead us back to the past, with St. Mark that past seems to become living. Hence he constantly uses the present tense in his narrative. (*b*) "Immediately" is his "catchword." It occurs not less than forty-two times in this short book. (*c*) Life—life details drop from his pencil, until narratives for which there are parallels in the other synoptics seem to be pre-eminently his (xv. 29; i. 24). (2) The influence of St. Peter upon this Gospel (attested by antiquity with one voice) may be repeatedly traced in its peculiarities; we can hear throughout the voice of the Apostle who wrote, "Marcus my son." (3) The leading ideas of this Gospel are (*a*) that Jesus is Lord, not only of nature and the world of spirits, not only of storms and diseases, but of the sick, stormy, guilty, sorrowing, passionate, yet yearning heart of man. (*b*) That the life of Jesus is a life of alternate rest and victory, withdrawal and working.

II. On the whole in St. Mark we have not so much as in St. Matthew, the point of convergence of the prophetic rays in the Messiah, the son of Abraham and David. Not so much as in St. Luke, the fairest of the children of men, Priest and Victim, the Teacher of grace and forgiveness. Not so much as in St. John, the Eternal Word made flesh, floating in a robe of heavenly light. It is the Gospel whose emblem is the Lion, whose Hero is full of Divine love and Divine strength. It is the Gospel which was addressed to the Romans, to free them from the misery of scepticism, from the grinding dominion of superhuman force unguided by a loving will. Here, brief as it is, we have, in its essential germs, all the theology of the Church. Had every other part of the New Testament perished, Christianity might have been developed from this.

BISHOP ALEXANDER, *Leading Ideas of the Gospels*, p. 36.

I. ONE of the great cravings of our human nature which the Gospel of Jesus supplies is our craving for light.

II. Another craving and want of our nature which the Gospel supplies is love.

III. The Gospel is adapted to our nature because it exhibits a pattern of perfectness among men.

IV. The Gospel points out the way to peace: to peace with God, and to peace and rest in the conscience and heart.

V. The Gospel of Christ supplies man with the power and the consolation he needs for times of duty and trial.

VI. The Gospel meets and satisfies our instinct after fellowship.

VII. It also meets and satisfies our longing for immortality.

J. M. SLOAN, *Christian Press*, Dec. 13th, 1877.

REFERENCES: i. 1.—G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines*, p. 400; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 1; *Homilist*, new series, vol. iii., p. 424; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 395. i. 1, 2.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 39. i. 1-8.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 40. i. 1-31.—*Ibid.*, p. 144. i. 2, 3.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 398. i. 3.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 404. i. 2-6.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 6.

Chap. i., ver. 4.—"John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

LAW before Liberty.

As far as Holy Scripture and historical certainty teach us we see man always the same being in body, and brain, and feeling, but in experience a child; even as we also, with all our boastings, shall be children to the more experienced generations to come. This it is which makes the old world so full of power to us. We travel, bit by bit, along the track of life, and see how each lesson was taught and great principles enforced one by one, and all the bitter penalties that came on men, who little knew that the whole world teaching was being wrought out in them, but knew right well what they had to do at the time they chose evil.

I. The Law before the Gospel, St. John the Baptist before Christ, are the great examples of this truth. God for fifteen hundred years pressed the need of law, sternly and unceasingly, by many punishments and many blessings, on His people. Mark, too, the very remarkable fact that the Jew did not know in the least when he obeyed the little, everyday laws which made him a marked man among other nations, that his national life first, afterwards his Christian life, depended on his honour and his obedience. No man knows what depends on

his being faithful; we only know what our honour and faithfulness require.

II. The sin of our day is law-breaking under pretence of liberty. There can be no liberty in man or society without perfect trustworthiness and self-mastery. When I look back at the ignorance of the wisest and holiest Jew as to the real meaning of his laws, which we Christians see so plainly, I cannot help looking forward, and feeling that we must be equally ignorant of the great, living world destined to come out of our laws. I feel my ignorance, whilst I see an unknown glory in doing right. Love of Christ destroys law by doing more than the law requires, in no other way. St. John the Baptist, the great personification of righteous law and self-mastery, comes first to preach the baptism of repentance. You cannot be Christians and lawbreakers; you cannot be Christians and rash criticisers of law. When your love for Christ makes you do always far more than law demands, then you can disregard law. He who gives, for example, does not want to be told not to steal.

E. THRING, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 238.

REFERENCES: i. 4.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 99. i. 4-8.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 40. i. 4-9.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 150. i. 7-11.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 11.

Chap. i., vers. 9-15.

I. JOHN'S dispensation was thus shown to be of Divine appointment. Notice the beauty of John's work in relation both to the past and to the future. It was a baptism unto repentance—a baptism, and so connected with the ceremonial past; a baptism unto *repentance*, and so introductory to a new and more intensely spiritual state of things.

II. But why should Jesus Christ identify Himself with a baptism which was unto repentance? His identification with that baptism was not for the purpose of personal confession, but for the purpose of official absorption; He took up the dispensation, and ended it by the introduction of a better. So, when He took upon Himself the nature of mankind, He did not degrade and enfeeble God, He elevated and glorified man.

III. Vers. 13, 14. (1) Sonship does not exempt from redemption. (2) Temptation does not invalidate sonship. (3) Temptation, rightly answered, makes sonship a life and power.

IV. Vers. 14, 15. (1) The imprisonment of the servant does

not hinder the progress of the master. (2) Ill treatment of the messenger may actually help to prove the divinity of the message. (*a*) It tests sincerity. (*b*) It tests the sustaining power of the doctrine that is preached. The fifteenth verse shows Jesus Christ in three aspects: (1) As the Interpreter of time; (2) As the Revealer of the Divine kingdom; (3) As a spiritual Regenerator. Under these heads note *Time:* The preparative process—the development of opportunity—the moral import of certain times. *Kingdom:* Not a transient erection; not a subordinate arrangement; not a human ambition—the Kingdom of God. *Regeneration:* Vital, progressive, spiritual. It is to be specially noted that Jesus Christ preached the kingdom of God as a *Gospel;* rightly understood it is not a despotism, it is not a terror; it is the supremacy of light, of truth, of love.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 11.

REFERENCES: i. 9-11.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 50; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 42; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol x., p. 294. i. 9-13.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 152. i. 11-13.—J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. ii., p. 33. i. 12-13.—A. C. Tait, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 145; *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iii., No. 321; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., pp. 44, 161; G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines*, p. 76; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 15; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 58; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 355; vol. vi., p. 148. i. 13—*Ibid.*, vol. v., p. 149; J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 15th series, p. 93; *Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 133.

Chap. i., ver. 14.—"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God."

Two things appear on the surface in the Psalmists' interpretation of the idea of the kingdom of God.

I. One is its moral purpose. The kingdom of God is indeed exhibited in the Psalms in all its magnificence; in all its breadth; over nature and man; over the stars of the sky, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; over the storms of the desert and the waterfloods; over the march of history and the destinies of nations, and the secrets of the heart of man; over all that vast, inconceivable universe beyond the most distant star. But the impressiveness and the awe and the wonder with which the Psalmists dwelt on what was outward and tangible, makes all the more striking the clearness, the strength with which they discerned amid all the might and majesty of God's everlasting dominion; amid all its beauty and all its terrors, the supreme

and governing power of a moral purpose of the law of holiness and righteousness and truth. There is a conviction about the kingdom, which, from the first Psalm to the last, knows no blessedness but the blessedness of righteousness, of innocence, of pardon; it is a kingdom far above man's power to influence; far above man's capacity to comprehend or measure; which is revealed to man only that he may understand that the law which never can be broken—more firm than the round world, which cannot be moved, than the heavens so far above us—the law which no change can touch, no might can alter, is the eternal law of right and wrong.

II. Equally noticeable is the breadth with which the Psalmists assumed and announced the universal character of the kingdom of God; for they were not insensible to the privileged position of the chosen people; they had all an Israelite's feeling that God dwelt and ruled in Israel as He did nowhere else; their hearts swelled at the remembrance of the greatness of their fortunes, at the pathetic vicissitudes of her most wonderful history. But though they were so conscious of their own wonderful election, the heathen are not, in their thoughts, excluded from the kingdom of God. He who dwelt in Zion or Jerusalem was yet God of all the families of the earth; and for the blessing of all the families of the earth was the blessing given to Abraham and his seed. That vast sea of nations which surged around the narrow bounds of Israel, so utterly unlike it in language, in worship, in history; separated from it as widely as if they had been inhabitants of another world, was yet saved and ruled by the All-Holy, whom they worshipped. They, the first fruits, the firstborn of mankind, were but the leaders in the song of praise.

R. W. CHURCH, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 385.

Chap. i., vers. 14, 15.—"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."

REPENTANCE and Faith.

I. Consider the insufficiency of repentance by itself to procure the forgiveness of sin. Turn to analogy; turn to experience; turn to reason, and you may equally prove the fallacy of the opinion, which would establish a necessary connection between repentance and forgiveness. So long as there is any notion of the virtue of repentance—its virtue as a necessary procuring of

pardon and acceptance—there must be a suspicion that the atonement is not called for, and therefore a question as to whether, indeed, it have ever been made.

II. Consider the suitableness of faith to being associated, as it is in the text, with repentance. If the sacrifice of Christ removes all the obstacles which appear to us to lie in the way of forgiveness, there can be no difficulty in admitting the suitableness of faith to be combined with repentance as a condition; for faith is simply that through which, as an instrument or hand, we lay hold on, and appropriate, the results of Christ's obedience and death. Believing in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, we pass into a position, not indeed of actual innocence, for nothing can destroy the fact that we have sinned, but we pass into a position in which no claim can be substantiated against us, which we cannot show to have been fully met and fully discharged.

III. Note the thorough harmony of the conditions laid down in our text with the blessed fact that eternal life is God's free gift through Christ. The conditions do not take off the least from the freeness of salvation. There may be nothing meritorious in the conditions, but, nevertheless, God may be pleased to impose those conditions, and to determine that He will not bestow the gift unless they are performed. I am not pardoned for the sake of my repentance; I am not pardoned for the sake of my faith, and yet it hath pleased God to appoint that without repentance and faith I shall not be pardoned, but that with them I shall. Through repentance and faith the merit of Christ is appropriated to you, but when appropriated it is as independent, as alone, in gaining entrance for you into heaven, as though there had been no conditions for its appropriation.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,514.

REFERENCES: i. 14, 15.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 430; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 154; vol. x., p. 235. i. 14-20.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 20. i. 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 460; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. i., p. 15.

Chap. i., vers. 16-34.

I. VERS. 16-20. (1) Christ is the Preparer of His servants. "I will make you"—how much was involved in that promise. (*a*) Authority; (*b*) Qualification. (2) Small beginnings compatible with sublime results. (3) The claims of God override all other claims—the sons left their father. (4) The discharge

of common duties the best preparation for higher call's. (5) The place of the servant is after the master—"Come ye after Me;" they are not invited to equal terms, they must walk in the King's shadow.

II. Vers. 21, 22. (1) Men will teach well only as they teach under Christ. (2) Authority is impossible apart from association with the Master. (3) Authority of tone must come from intensity of conviction. (4) Hearers know the voice of authority. (5) The Christian teacher is to show his supremacy over all other teachers.

III. Vers. 23-8. (1) Wickedness is always afraid of purity. (2) Wickedness has no favour to ask of purity, except to be let alone. (3) Wickedness can always identify the presence of the spirit of Jesus Christ. (4) For this reason the Church is a constant judgment upon all unclean spirits. (5) The completeness of Jesus Christ's authority—His authority in *doctrine*, and His authority in work. (6) Fulness of spiritual life is the guarantee of fulness of spiritual power.

IV. Vers. 29-31. Jesus Christ had both a public and private ministry; He worked in the synagogue, He worked also in the domestic circle. Let us learn from this (1) that the individual case as well as the case of the multitude should be regarded as worthy of attention. (2) That bodily diseases as well as spiritual ailments are within the sphere of our solicitude; we are to be philanthropic as well as spiritually minded. (3) We are to put ourselves in personal contact with those who suffer.

V. Vers. 32-4. The natural sun set, but the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in His wings. In the evening as well as in the morning Jesus Christ was at work. Men come to Jesus Christ according to the urgency of their want. It is well if men can feel their want of Christ at any point.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 23.

REFERENCES: i. 16-19.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 156. i. 16-20.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 46; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 17; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 154. i. 16-35.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 253.

Chap. i., ver. 17.—"And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men."

CHRIST'S Election of Disciples.

Christ chose as His messengers the unlearned and poor, and

the outcast of the theologians, and the uninterested in politics, and the men and women of whom society knew nothing; the fisherman and the publican, the Pharisee who left the priestly ranks, the rich who left their riches, the Israelite without guile, the cottager, the sinner and the harlot who were contrite; but chiefly—for with these in His favourite haunts He most companioned—the fishermen of the lake of Galilee.

I. "Come," He said, "I will make you fishers of men. And they left all, and followed Him." He was not wrong, then, in His choice. These men, who gave up all at once for Him, had impulse, heart, impetuosity, and love. These were the first elements He wanted in the character of His followers, the main things needed for their work. It was a hard task He set them to; and no faint-heartedness or questioning could bear its trials. They had—and it was their chief quality—the heart to venture greatly, the love to give up all, the faith which removed mountains. Not in their diction was the word impossible.

II. It was this intensity of spirit that Christ stirred in His followers. He had the prophet's power of kindling passion, of awaking a youth in those who loved Him. No one who reads the Gospels but recognises the unique power of Christ's personality. But had that been all, His work would not have been done; the life He made in men would scarcely have lasted beyond His death. With the passing of the person would have passed the power. No; the main thing was this, that the personal influence was weighted with infinite, divine, ideal thoughts; was used to stablish living truths in the hearts of men; living, because they created and supported a life. That was His real power. "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." That was the sort of thought He gave them.

III. Fishers of men! Surely they were that. They saw before them a vast ocean, in whose depths were men and women and children dead in sin, lost in ignorance, superstition, and misery. In a few small barks they launched forth into the deep, and let down their nets for a draught; they rescued Jew, Greek, Roman, barbarian, king, priest, courtier, workman, slave, all nations, kindreds, tongues, and classes. And that is your work. Are you doing it with all your heart? It is the one foremost duty, and the one transcendent blessing of life, to seek and save the lost, the suffering, and the ignorant. And when we do this, it becomes the master-thought of life. The airs of heaven breathe through our daily labour. All is sacred, for

in all that we are doing, we do Christ's work of rescuing men.

S. A. BROOKE, *The Spirit of the Christian Life*, p. 294 (see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 390).

REFERENCES: i. 17.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. xiii., p. 111. i. 18.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 173. i. 19, 20.—R. Balgarnie, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 214. i. 21-8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1765; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 294: H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 25; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 127.

Chap. i., ver. 23.—"A man with an unclean spirit."

I. IT was the Sabbath day in the early spring when our Lord performed this, the first miracle recorded by St. Mark. All nature seemed hushed in a profound and holy calm. The little town of Capernaum, exalted unto heaven, built on bold, rising ground, lay at rest; its white marble synagogue, given by a Roman soldier, a heathen man, to the Jewish nation whom he loved, glittered in dazzling brightness in the early morning sun. Soon the synagogue is filled, and to the men of Capernaum Jesus, the prophet of Galilee, spake. And as they listened, as only crowds do listen when the speaker's soul goes forth and holds them spellbound, there rose a strange and startling cry. All unobserved, a poor demoniac had entered that house of prayer. Perhaps he came thinking it to be a sanctuary, where for a moment he might be soothed by memories of Sabbath days passed away for ever. Suddenly the air is rent by his shriek of terror; each worshipper is struck dumb with fear. The crowd heard the shriek, they saw the ghostly vision of the unclean demoniac, but were helpless. In tones almost of anger, but with a word of power, the Prophet that should come into the world bids the unclean spirit come out. No wonder that the little flock was filled with admiration and enthusiasm; no wonder that forthwith His fame spread abroad throughout all that country.

II. See the interest which God's call evoked; see the effect upon the men of Capernaum, the conquest, so it seemed, of their whole heart; see their amazement, their absolute conviction, as the demoniac lay before them healed. Yet in a few days all was forgotten, and they who had the unspeakable blessedness of hearing Christ's words spoken from His own lip, they who beheld one of His most startling miracles, heard soon after that most awful woe, "Shall be brought down to hell." Let us be

warned by the sad history of Capernaum so often repeated. The mere enjoyment of hearing God's voice, or joining in services or sacraments, will not do anything for us save increase our condemnation, unless we join together earnest prayer to God the Holy Ghost and stern resolution of a braver, truer, higher life, and begin at once to *do* the will of God.

T. Birkett-Dover, *The Ministry of Mercy*, p. 21.

References: i. 22.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 415; W. Knight, *Dundee Pulpit*, p. 145. i. 23.—W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. i., p. 55. i. 23-7.—*Homilist*, vol. iv., p. 376; G. Macdonald, *The Miracles of our Lord*, p. 161. i. 24.—J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 214. i. 27.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 472; G. E. L. Cotton, *Sermons and Addresses in Marlborough College*, p. 408. i. 29-33.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1236. i. 29-35.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 30. i. 30.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 246. i. 30, 31.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 36; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 254. i. 31.—W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. i., p. 69. i. 32-4.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 49; E. Paxton Hood, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 392. i. 33, 34.—G. F. Maclear, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 332.

Chap. i., ver. 35.—"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."

The Prayers of Jesus.

Note, I. The mystery of the prayers of Jesus. If Jesus is, as we believe, God, how could God pray to God? How were there any needs in His nature on behalf of which He could pray? A partial answer is found in the truth that all prayers do not spring from a sense of need. The highest form of prayer is conversation with God—the familiar talk of a child with his father. It was so with the Son; but this communion does not clear away the mystery of Jesus' prayers. The only adequate explanation is Christ's humanity. Jesus prayed because He was a man. Human nature, even in Him, was a feeble, tender thing. He had to fall back on the strength found in prayer. And if He, perfect in every stage of His development, and with no past weakening every present effort, needed prayer, how much more do we.

II. His habits of prayer. Some of these habits are recorded. They are deeply interesting and instructive. (1) He used, for example, to go out of the house in which He was, into the solitudes of nature, to pray. (2) Christ prayed in company

as well as in secret. We read of Him taking now two or three disciples, and again the twelve apart for prayer. United prayer acts on many minds in the same way as conversation. Where two or three meet together, hearts burn, and Christ Himself appears in their midst.

III. The occasions on which He prayed. Some such occasions get special prominence. (1) He prayed before taking an important step in life; (2) He prayed when His life was specially busy; (3) He prayed before entering temptation; (4) He died praying.

IV. The answer to His prayers. Out of these we shall select two. (*a*) The transfiguration was an answer to prayer. (*b*) His baptism was an answer to prayer.

J. STALKER, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 373.

PRAYER a Mark of True Holiness.

I. Without doubt our Lord prayed for the furtherance of that work which His Father had given Him to do. It is remarkable that the occasions of retirement and prayer mentioned by the Evangelists are those which precede the miracle of walking on the water, the going forth to preach, the choice of the apostles, the transfiguration, the temptation of Peter, and His own betrayal in the garden. Amidst the contradiction of sinners, and the deadness of the unbelieving, with the foresight of the great sin of the world which should be committed in His own passion, with the whole career and probation of His Church through this perilous world, before His prophetic intuition, we may in some little measure understand what yearning desires of love and sorrow moved Him to all but unceasing intercession.

II. But His prayers were not altogether for others. Deeply mysterious as it is, they were offered also for Himself. It was a property of His true humiliation that He should derive strength through prayer; and a part of His humiliation for us that He should need to pray.

III. And once more He prayed while He was on earth, because prayer was the nearest return to the glory which He laid aside when He was made man. It was, if we may so speak, His only true dwelling, rest, home, delight. We read of His weeping, and His being wearied, and of His being troubled in spirit; but we never read that He rested, except upon the brink of a well by the wayside, nor that He slept, except in the ship. Prayer and converse with His Father in heaven was the only shelter into which the world could not break.

IV. From this view we learn (1) that a life of habitual prayer is a life of the highest perfection; and that our prayer will be more or less perfect in proportion as our state of holiness is more or less advanced. (2) The spirit of prayer is a direct gift from God. Prayer springs from compunction, and compunction from love to Him whom our sins have pierced; and to perceive this is the gift of God, sometimes given early in the life of a penitent, but for the most part after years of fear and mortification. (3) As the sacrifice of Christ is the one only effectual sacrifice, so is His the one only true and all-prevailing prayer.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 326

I. THE prayers of our Lord were not poured forth for an example only, but rather were the expression of the real feelings of our Lord's human soul—the means whereby He sought fresh supplies of strength to meet the ceaseless onset of the powers of darkness. His powers of prayer were the times when He retired to the contemplation of that glorious object, on which, with His Father, He had entered, in them He surrendered His soul unreservedly to all the emotions of Divine love—both that which He felt for the Father, and which He felt for all mankind, that thus He might the better dedicate Himself to the work He had undertaken.

II. How do we fail here to imitate our Saviour? There is a lesson here for us all, both old and young. Prayer such as Christ's is the great weapon with which the saints of every age have prospered in their warfare. There is nothing which those who spend a busy life have so much need to beg of God as the earnest resolution and the power, at whatever cost, to give themselves in very truth to prayer.

A. C. TAIT, *Lessons for School Life*, p. 40.

ONE Habit of Jesus.

Great natures make their own habits. Their moods are not acquired, but are native to them. The habits of a great nature are shaped and coloured by the magnificent quality within. It is because of the greatness of Jesus, especially on the religious side of His nature, that He becomes the great object of studentship to one who would cultivate like religiousness in his own nature. That which was natural and spontaneous in Him must be acquired by us, and acquired, too, chiefly by the way of imitation. Let us be grateful to heaven that it gave to us an

Ideal, to which, by gradual approximations and persevering effort, we can in the end bring the real.

I. Among His habits Jesus had one from which I wish to draw a lesson. It was the habit of retiring ever and anon from the presence of His intimate disciples to some secluded spot. We know that He loved to be alone with Himself. Perhaps this was the result of His greatness; that interior greatness of His nature which made Him, in one sense, uncompanionable with men of this earth. The Teacher wearied of being with His pupils constantly. Their thoughts were not His thoughts. He condescended to them, but the mental and spiritual posture which He had to assume when He stooped to their level wearied Him. In order to rest Himself He had to rise to the full erectness of His stature. This withdrew Him from them, for it lifted Him above them. Alone, with men withdrawn, their little world shut out, the noise of their babbling silenced, He could draw nigh to the Eternal Father, and see the invisible glories float around Him, and hold conversations with those who speak with a finer language than the tongues of this earth have ever learned.

II. Whatever was the cause out of which grew this habit of Jesus, we feel confident there was a cause. And it was a cause existing in connection with human natures, and in earthly circumstance. Men ministered unto Him, and men also interrupted ministration needed by His soul. Hence He mingled with men and He withdrew from men. He met them, and anon He departed from them. In the midst of His public life He clung to His privacy. Modern civilisation is a civilisation of trade, of commerce, of intercourse between man and man. There are times when the earth is a delight, and there are times, too, when we turn from the earth with a cry at our hearts that we might leave it for ever because of its burdens. In brief, there are times when the seen and the heard minister to us. But, on the other hand, there are times when out of the unseen alone cometh help, and the ravens of silence, as sent of God, coming on noiseless wing, alone bring bread to our starving souls. In retirement (1) we get a vivid idea of God as a real Being; (2) the soul regains its lost pre-eminence, and seems to the reason superior to all else.

W. H. MURRAY, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 408.

REFERENCES: i. 35.—W. H. Jellie, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 196; G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines*, p. 81; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 143; vol. vi., p. 145.

Chap. i., vers. 35-9.

I. VER. 35.—There is something very touchingly illustrative of our Saviour's humanity in this verse. He could have prayed upon His couch; yet as He worked after the sun had set, so He departed to pray before the sun had risen. If the Master required to pray, can the servants live without communion with God? To begin the day with God is the only method of setting oneself above all its events, and triumphing over them with perfect mastery. A discourse might be founded on these words, showing the religious uses of time. (1) There would be social service, such as we have seen in the life of Christ; (2) there would be public ministry, in which crowds might enjoy our Christian teaching; (3) there would be sacred devotion, in which the soul will hold close intercourse with God.

II. Vers. 36-9.—The true disciple always knows where to find the Master. The disciples knew the habits of their Lord; they knew that in some hidden places He could be found in the early hours of the day; at all events they knew that Jesus Christ would be found in the path of usefulness, or preparation for usefulness. What the disciples said in their wondering delight shall one day be literally true. All men will be in search of the Saviour of the world. In the first instance, the Saviour sought all men, and in the second all men will seek the Saviour. Instant response to the desire of the world is shown in Christ's readiness still further to preach the Gospel. His object in life was undivided, and its unity was its omnipotence. Jesus Christ preached, and He called His servants to the same work. Preaching can never fail to be one of the mightiest instruments in stirring the human mind and in moulding human society. Individual preaching may become feeble; even distinguished ministers may cool in the enthusiasm with which they undertook their great work; but preaching as instituted by Jesus Christ, exemplified in His own ministry, can never cease to be one of the most effective agencies in human education and progress. PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 33.

REFERENCES: i. 35-9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1,769; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 298. i. 36-45.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 34.

Chap. i., vers. 40-5.

I. IN this chapter we have seen some who were brought to the Saviour, and in the 40th verse we find a man who came to

Jesus. Note the blessedness of those who have others to conduct them to Jesus Christ; also note the opportunity which each man has of making his case known to Jesus Christ.

II. Ver. 44 may be used for the purpose of showing how Jesus Christ brings men into the established laws and relations of His own government, even under circumstances which might seem to justify an exception to the usual course of things. In our highest moments of inspiration and delight we ought to be controlled by law. Even our ecstasy should be regulated where it might endanger the constancy and faithfulness of our life. Jesus Christ never dissociates the ministry from the preceding dispensations; He always heightens and consummates; He never destroys except by fulfilment as the fruit destroys the blossom. The whole chapter might be used for the purpose of showing how possible it is for our Christian life to be sublime from the very beginning.

III. The 45th verse shows how much can be done by the energy of one man. So much did the recovered leper publish his restoration that Jesus Christ could no more openly enter into the city by reason of the multitude that thronged upon Him, and by reason of the sensation which so great a miracle had created. Is there not in this incident an illustration of what we may do by being faithful to our convictions and impulses regarding the Son of God? Have we been healed without publishing the fact? Have we mentioned the fact of our conversion even to our dearest friend? Learn from the leper the possibility of so exalting a whole neighbourhood about personal recovery as to extend the name, and bring blessings upon the gracious power, of Jesus Christ.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 43.

REFERENCES: i. 40.—W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. i., p. 87; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 49. i. 40-2.—J. G. Greenbough, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p 280. i. 40-5.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 137. i. 41.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 248. i. 43-5.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 107; vol. v., p. 299. i. 45.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1,298.

Chap. i.

THE Cure of Simon's Wife's Mother.

Pain, sickness, delirium, madness, as great infringements of the laws of nature as the miracles themselves, are such veritable presences to the human experience that what bears no relation to their existence cannot be the God of the human race. And the man who cannot find his God in the fog of suffering, no

less than he who forgets his God in the sunshine of health, has learned little either of St. Paul or St. John.

I. All suffering is against the ideal order of things. No man can love pain. It is an unlovely, an ugly, abhorrent thing. The more true and delicate the bodily and mental constitution, the more it must recoil from pain. No one, I think, could dislike pain so much as the Saviour must have disliked it. God dislikes it; He is then on our side in this matter. He knows it is grievous to be borne; a thing He would cast out of His blessed universe, save for reasons.

II. Let us look at the miracle as received by the woman. She had a great fever. She was tossing from side to side in vain attempts to ease a nameless misery. A sudden ceasing of motions uncontrolled; a coolness gliding through the burning skin; a sense of waking into repose; a consciousness of all-pervading well-being, of strength conquering weakness, of light displacing darkness, of urging life at the heart; and behold! she is sitting up in her bed, a hand clasping hers, a face looking into hers. He has judged the evil thing, and it is gone.

III. In the matter of healing, as in all the miracles, we find Jesus doing the works of the Father. God is our Saviour; the Son of God comes healing the sick, doing that before our eyes which the Father, for His own reasons, does from behind the veil of His creation and its laws. The cure comes by law; comes by the physician who brings the law to bear on us. We awake, and lo! it is God the Saviour. Need I, to combat the vulgar notion that the essence of the miracles lies in their power, dwell upon this miracle further? Surely no one who honours the Saviour will for a moment imagine Him, as He entered the chamber where the woman lay tormented, saying to Himself, "Here is an opportunity of showing how mighty My Father is!" No. There was suffering; here was healing. What I could imagine Him saying to Himself would be, "Here I can help! Here My Father will let Me put forth My healing, and give her back to her people."

G. MACDONALD, *Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 25.

REFERENCES: ii. 1, 2.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. vi., p. 8; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 38.

Chap. ii., vers. 1-12.

NOTE here:—

1. The helplessness of some men. All helplessness traceable to sin.

II. The social usefulness of some other men. We can all carry sufferers to Christ, even when we cannot heal them ourselves. To point a sinner to Christ is a good work; to carry a little child to the Saviour is to execute a most blessed mission.

III. The possibilities of earnestness. These men uncovered the roof in their determination to approach the Healer.

IV. The vigilance of Jesus Christ over human action. He knew the meaning of the extraordinary movement that was taking place, and the reward which He gave to the earnest men was great.

V. The censorious spirits of technical observers.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 45.

REFERENCES: ii. 1-12.—J. S. Exell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 229. ii. 3, 4.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 542. ii. 3, 12.—*Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 9. ii. 4.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 251; Parker, *Christian Commonwealth*, vol. vii., p. 407. ii. 5.—W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. i., p. 104; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 409.

Chap. ii., ver. 8.—**When Jesus perceived in His Spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?"**

THE text shows—

I. An important aspect of human power. Secrecy; having two lives. These considerations make us mysteries to one another.

II. A startling instance of Divine insight.

III. A splendid manifestation of Christ's fearlessness.

IV. A solemn example of the confusion which will fall upon all Christ's objectors. PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 303.

REFERENCES: ii. 8.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 561. ii. 9.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 112. ii. 10.—*Ibid.*, vol. iii., p. 50; R. E. Wallis, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iii., p. 106. ii. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1,269. ii. 13.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 253. ii. 13-15.—*Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 11. ii. 13-17.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 267; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 43. ii. 14.—J. S. Exell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 181. ii. 14, 15.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 462. ii. 15-17.—*Ibid.*, p. 108; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of The Twelve*, p. 20. ii. 15-22.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 154.

Chap. ii., ver. 16.—**"And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto His disciples, How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?"**

I. THE question which was asked by the scribes and Pharisees is very instructive, for the answer to it illustrates the glory of

our Lord Jesus Christ in His work and person. Why was He at all at the feast of Matthew? Because He was and is the Friend of sinners. Here we have one of the most glorious titles of our Lord and Saviour; not merely because, being such as we are, we naturally fix our eyes upon those qualities in Him which meet most directly and consolingly the case of our fallen and wounded nature; not chiefly because, in ancient language, our wants are the real measure of our enthusiasms; but because God's condescensions reveal His glory even more completely than it is revealed by His magnificence. The magnificence of God is altogether beyond us. By His condescension He places Himself within our powers of, in some degree, understanding Him. His condescension is the visible measure of His love. And thus the glory of His work depends upon and illustrates another glory—the glory of His character. He could—He can—afford to be the Friend of sinners. Purity is fearless where mere respectability is timid; where it is frightened at the whisperings of evil tongues; where it is frightened at the consciousness of inward weakness, if indeed it be only weakness. It was the glory of Christ, as the sinless Friend of sinners, which made Him eat and drink as He did, to the scandal of the Pharisees, in the house of Levi.

II. And the answer to the question of the scribes and Pharisees is a comment on the action and history of the Church of Christ. Of her, too, the complaint has been made, age after age, by contemporary Pharisees, sometimes in ignorance, sometimes in malice—"How is it that she eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners." Like her Lord, the Church has entered into the life of sinful humanity. The idea of a hermit Church—of a Church made up of recluses, such as Donatists—such as some Puritans have imagined, involves nothing less than a sacrifice of the whole plan of Jesus Christ for the regeneration of the world. Still must the Church do what she may for the blessing and improvement of all departments of activity and life. Duty is not less duty because it is dangerous. Precautions and safeguards are near at hand, but she may not cease to eat and drink with publicans and sinners.

III. These words are not without suggestiveness as to the duty and conduct of private Christians. On what terms ought a Christian to consort with those who openly deny the truth of religion, or who live in flagrant violation of its precepts? Here there are two dangers to guard against. (1) On the one hand, we must beware of Pharisaism; that rank weed which so soon

springs up in the souls of those who are trying to serve God. (2) On the other hand, we must guard against an appearance or affectation of indifference to the known will of God, whether in matters of faith or conduct.

H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 898.

References: ii. 16, 17.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. vi., p. 12. ii. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1,345; D. Fraser, *Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 106.

Chap. ii., vers. 18-20.

A Word from Jesus on Fasting.

Fasting, in its essence, is the restraint of self in respect of lower appetite, with special reference to abstinence from that which nourishes the body. Its advantages Jesus Christ never denied; indeed He availed Himself of them for forty days in the wilderness. Even the Pagans understood something of them. For example, the third day in the festival of the Eleusinian mysteries was a fast-day, and every supplicant at the oracle of Trophonius fasted twenty-four hours before he was prepared to receive the answer. During our Lord's days fasts were numerous, every Monday and Thursday being observed by the Essenes and the stricter Pharisees. He did not approve them, nor disapprove them, by any distinct declaration, but He very decidedly protested against the enforcement of them by any extraneous authority. He ordained, in short, that none were to regulate the piety of others by the rules which they might fairly make for themselves. It is to be feared that in this respect His law has often been violated. Coming now to a more close exposition of the text, we discern in it the four following truths:—

I. Hypocrisy is here condemned. We do not mean that John's disciples were guilty of this sin. Our Lord did not, for a moment, imply that they were hypocrites; but He did imply that His own disciples would be if they joined outwardly in a fast which was untrue to their own feeling. Hopeful and jubilant in the presence of their Lord, they could not fast, for the Bridegroom was with them.

II. Ritualism is here rebuked. By ritualism we mean putting external religious ceremonies in the place of spiritual acts of worship. During our Lord's ministry ritualism was rife. Customary observances had gradually usurped the place of vital religion with multitudes. Sacrifices were offered with no sense of guilt; washings were frequent even to absurdity, but

they did not express conscious uncleanness of soul; alms were profusely given, yet without any stirring of generosity or pity; and fasts were observed without any humiliation of soul before God. It is in accordance with the whole doctrine of Christ that He declares here that fasting is not a rite of any value in itself.

III. Freedom is here proclaimed. The law you have no right to impose on others; you may be called upon to make a rule for yourself.

IV. Joyousness is here inculcated as the prevailing characteristic of the Christian life. It is not a joy which arises from the pleasant circumstances of life, or from a happy and equable disposition, but from the assurance that Christ as your Saviour died for you.

A. ROWLAND, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 121.

REFERENCES: ii. 18.—G. E. L. Cotton, *Sermons and Addresses in Marlborough College*, p. 57. ii. 18-20.—J. S. Exell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 207; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. vi., p. 13.

Chap. ii., vers. 18-22.

I. THERE should be differences between Jesus Christ's disciples and the disciples of all other men. It is noticeable how soon these differences were detected by the critics of the day. The differences should be as broadly marked now as they were in the days of Jesus Christ's visible ministry.

II. These differences should find their explanation in Jesus Christ, not in the expression of the disciples themselves. Jesus Christ takes upon Himself the responsibility of determining the public attitude of His disciples.

III. The illustration about pieces of cloth and the different wines shows the perfect uniqueness of Christianity. There is to be no patching, there is to be no compromising; Christianity is to have a distinctiveness and speciality of its own.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 59.

REFERENCES: ii. 18-22.—A. B. Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 295; *Ibid.*, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 69; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 47.

Chap. ii., ver. 19.

HE Secret of Gladness.

There are three subjects for consideration arising from the words of my text: The Bridegroom; the Presence of the Bridegroom; the Joy of the Bridegroom's Presence.

I. With regard to the first a few words will suffice. The first thing that strikes me is the singular appropriateness and the delicate pathetic beauty in the employment of this name by Christ in the existing circumstances. Who was it that had first said, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom," etc.? Why, it was the master of these very men who were asking the question. John's disciples came and said, "Why do not your disciples fast?" And our Lord reminded them of their own teacher's words, when He said, "The friend of the bridegroom can only be glad." And so He would say to them, "In your master's own conception of what I am, and of the joy that comes from My presence, he might have taught you who I am, and why it is that the men who stand around Me are glad."

II. A word as to the Presence of the Bridegroom. It might seem as if this text condemned us who love an unseen and absent Lord to exclusion from the joy which is made to depend on His presence. Are we in the dreary period when the bridegroom is taken away, and fasting appropriate? Surely not. The time of mourning for an absent Christ was only three days; the law for the years of the Church's history between the moment when the uplifted eyes of the gazers lost Him in the symbolic cloud and the moment when He shall come again is, "Lo, I am with you always." The absent Christ is the present Christ. The presence which survives, which is true for us here to-day, may be a far better and more blessed and real thing than the presence of the mere bodily form in which He once dwelt.

III. The Joy of the Bridegroom's Presence. What was it that made these rude lives so glad when Christ was with them, filling them with strange new sweetness and power? The charm of personal character; the charm of contact with one whose lips were bringing to them fresh revelations of truth, fresh visions of God; whose whole life was the exhibition of a nature, beautiful, and noble, and pure, and tender, and sweet, and loving, beyond anything that they had ever seen before.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 1st series, p. 137.

REFERENCES: ii. 21.—J. S. Exell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 318. ii. 21, 22.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 106.

Chap. ii., ver. 23.

I. ALL positive laws must yield to man's necessities. The law as a formal common element may be broken, yet its spirit may be honoured.

II. There is a relation of life to positive laws; there is a relation to moral law, which is higher and more exacting.

III. Christ shows that in all ages circumstances have arisen which have necessitated a violation of literal sabbatism. David ate the shew-bread, and the priests profaned the temple, and yet were guiltless.

PARKER, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 120.

REFERENCES: ii. 23.—G. S. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 134. ii. 21, 22.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors in the Gospels*, p. 106.

Chap. ii., vers. 23-28.

I. THE Pharisees were a Class. They were not only Pharisees by name, but they were Pharisees by nature; that is, they were typical men; they were representative of a large fraction of the human race. One of the chief pharisaical characteristics was a love of form, of rule, of law, of custom; a love of the formalistic and the technical, as opposed to the spiritual and the natural. A Pharisee was a man and is a man who exaggerates the value of an ordinance, of a ceremony, of a ritualistic observance. A Pharisee was a man who loved and worshipped institutions as institutions, while he was thoughtless, perhaps, of the real spirit which they embodied. All men that exaggerate form, ceremony, ritualism; all men that live in the letter of the law while they ignore its spirit; all men that make the form of government, and that which is outward in institution, more valuable than the object of government, and that which vitalizes institutions, are Pharisees in blood and bone, by the ordainment of their nature. Such men are naturally tyrannical. Such men are naturally persecutors. Such men hinder beyond expression the true growth of the world.

II. Now Jesus, when He came to face these men, saw that He must teach them, and through them the world, a lesson. And the lesson which He taught them and the world was this: That man, in his rights, in his privileges, that are inalienable, is greater than any institution, nobler than any form of government, and more holy than any observance. There is no law that man cannot annul if it oppresses him; no government that he has not the Divine right to rebel against if it oppresses him; no custom or habit that he cannot tear in fragments and throw to the four winds, if it injuriously cramps his liberty, hinders his growth, or prevents his happiness. Christ declared that as a man He had rights which no ecclesiasticism could take from

Him; had a liberty which no priestly council could rob Him of. He declared that the Sabbath was a day to be used; used, not according to the dictation of self-constituted guardians, but according to individual necessities, individual opportunities, and individual profit. In short, He placed the sovereignty of judgment in respect to it as an institution, and as an observance, in the hands of each individual man, saying, "Therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath."

W. H. MURRAY, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 430.

I. IN this interview it is made clear: (1) That all critical inquiries are not to be condemned; (2) the question on the part of the Pharisees was not at all unnatural.

II. The perfect and inalienable supremacy of Jesus Christ is asserted in the last verse; He proclaims Himself Lord over time, over institutions, and over human affairs.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 60.

REFERENCES: ii. 23-28.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. vi., p. 14: A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 88; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 51.

Chap. ii., vers. 27, 28.—"And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: Therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath."

DURING His public ministry our Lord was repeatedly accused of breaking the Sabbath; and on such occasions He vindicated Himself in one or other of two ways.

I. Sometimes He stood upon His rights as a Divine Being to work at any time for the welfare of men. That was the course which He adopted when, in answer to those who sought to slay Him because He had healed the impotent man on the Sabbath day, He said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." A reply which not only made Himself equal with God, but cast a new light upon the meaning of the creation week. For it could have no pertinence to the case in dispute, unless its significance be something like this, "We are living now in the seventh day of the creation week. This is the time of Jehovah's rest." We have now no work of creation going on; no special additions have been made to the various orders of animals on the surface of the earth since man appeared; and in that sense God has been resting. But though He has not called anything new into existence, He has been continually at work in upholding all that He has made, and He has put forth special remedial

efforts for the restoration of man to the state in which he was formed at first, but from which he fell by his own sin. If therefore, during the Sabbath of creation's week, and while God is resting, He can yet put forth special exertions for the redemption and education of man, I am only following on the same line when, on the Sabbath of an ordinary week, I put forth my energy in the restoration of the impotent man to health.

II. At other times the defence of the Lord was based on the nature of the works which He had performed. He held and taught that it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath day. Nay, He went further, and declared that there is a class of duties which we not only may, but *must*, perform on that day. It was ordained at first for the benefit of man, and therefore it was never intended that it should operate to his detriment; whenever, therefore, an injury would be inflicted on a fellow-man by our refusing to labour for his assistance on the Sabbath, we are bound to exert ourselves, even on that day, for his relief. So by His sharp incisive logic our Lord cut away all the traditional ivy-growth which had so largely covered the primal ordinance of the Sabbath, and restored to it its own primal beauty and benevolence.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 103.

REFERENCES: ii. 27.—C. Girdlestone, *Twenty Parochial Sermons*, p. 245; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 228; vol. xxi, p. 92; G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines*, p. 257; M. R. Vincent, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 32; see also *American Pulpit of the Day*, vol. i., p. 258. ii. 27, 28.—A Barry, *Cheltenham College Sermons*, p. 46; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 103; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 95; G. E. L. Cotton, *Sermons and Addresses in Marlborough College*, p. 296.

Chap. ii., ver. 28.—"The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath."

(1) IT was instituted by Him. (2) It is kept on a day which was fixed by His authority. (3) It is intended to commemorate His resurrection. (4) It ought to be observed with a special regard to His will, and word, and work.

G. BROOKS, *Five Hundred Outlines of Sermons*, p. 257.

Chap iii., ver. 1.—"And He entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand."

NOTE:—

I. The meaning of the withered hand. It was a word picture of that infirmity—whatever it may be—which destroys

a man's power of doing anything well in this world of ours. There was a man there who had a withered hand. That right hand, as St. Luke describes it, robbed of its nourishment, hanging helplessly in a sling, was a picture of whatever deprives a man of the power of holy work, and renders him an incumbrance, if not a mischief, in God's great kingdom. (1) The bigotry of the Pharisees rendered them useless in the great kingdom of God and destroyed their power of serving Christ. (2) Prejudices wither up some of the energies of men. (3) Past inconsistences often wither up the power of service. (4) Easily besetting sins will paralyse the usefulness of any man who does not with earnestness, faith, and prayer, wage war against them. (5) The fear of man is another of the silent withering influences which restrain usefulness, and quench our zeal.

II. The healing of the withered hand. Christ came into this world not merely to set man free from the bondage of sin, but to emancipate all his faculties for holy service, to strengthen all his powers, to summon him to work while it is day. He cried in words which are preserved by three Evangelists, "Stretch forth thine hand," and immediately that hand which had no power in itself, which no human skill could heal, felt at once that a Divine energy was given to it. Divine strength was perfected in its weakness, and it was made whole even as the other. There are three lessons of practical value which we may learn from this narrative: (1) We may gather Christ's willingness to heal, as He is ever seeking us; His eye is always scanning our necessity; He knows our imperfections and shortcomings as no other can do, and He is able and willing to remove all that hampers and impedes the freedom of our spiritual life. (2) We may learn the way in which we are to make use of Divine strength. When the man willed to stretch forth his hand God willed in him; the communication of Divine strength was granted to him at the very moment when he determined to obey the will of Christ. This is just a type of what takes place whenever a sinner tries to seize and appropriate God's promises or God's strength. (4) Here is the great rule by which, at all times, we may overcome our listlessness and uselessness in God's service. It is by our own vigorous effort to overcome the withering up of our faculties that we shall test the worth of Divine promises. Let us stretch forth our hands, let us try to serve our Master; and let us work while it is day, for the night cometh.

H. R. Reynolds, *Notes of the Christian Life*, p. 207.

Chap. iii., vers. 1-5.

NOTE:—

I. Christ's detection of human incompleteness. He instantly discovered that there was a man in the synagogue with a withered hand.

II. Jesus Christ's power over partial disease. The man had only a withered hand. In some cases Christ used to heal thoroughly diseased men; in this case the disease was local; yet in both instances His power was the same.

III. Christ's inability to heal the obstinacy of His enemies.

IV. Christ's moral indignation overcoming all outward obstacles. He was indignant with the men who valued the sacredness of a day above the sacredness of a human life.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 68.

REFERENCES: iii. 1-6.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 55; *Homilist*, new series, vol. iii., p. 1; T. L. Cuyler, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 32; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. vi., p. 265; vol. xii., p. 37. iii. 2.—W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol i., p. 135; W. S. Houghton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 340.

Chap. iii., ver. 5.—He "looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts," etc.

OUR Lord goes into the synagogue at Capernaum, where He had already wrought more than one miracle, and there He finds an object for His healing power in a poor man with a withered hand; and also a little knot of His enemies. The scribes and Pharisees expect Christ to heal the man. So much had they learned of His tenderness and of His power. But their belief that He could work a miracle did not carry them one step towards a recognition of Him as sent by God. They have no eye for the miracle, because they expect that He is going to break the Sabbath. There is nothing so blind as formal religionism. The poor man's infirmity did not touch their hearts with one little throb of compassion. They had rather that he had gone crippled all his days than that one of their rabbinical Sabbath restrictions should be violated. There is nothing so cruel as formal religionism. Our Lord reduces them all to silence and perplexity by His question, sharp, penetrating, unexpected, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath day, or to do evil? You are ready to blame Me as breaking your Sabbatarian regulations if I heal this man. What if I do not heal him? Will that be doing nothing? Will not that be a worse breach of the Sabbath day than if I heal him?"

He takes the question altogether out of the region of pedantic rabbinism, and bases His vindication upon the two great principles that mercy and help hallow any day, and that not to do good when we can is to do harm; and not to save life is to kill. They are silenced. His arrow touches them; they do not speak because they cannot answer, and they will not yield. There is a struggle going on in them, which Christ sees, and He fixes them with that steadfast look of His, of which our Evangelist is the only one who tells us what it expressed, and by what it was occasioned. "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved."

I. Consider, first, the solemn fact of Christ's anger. It is the only occasion, so far as I remember, upon which that emotion is attributed to Him. Once and once only, the flash came out of the clear sky of that meek and gentle heart. He was once angry, and we may learn the lesson of the possibilities that lay slumbering in His love. He was only once angry, and we may learn the lesson that His perfect and Divine charity is not easily provoked. Christ's anger was part of the perfection of His manhood. The man that cannot be angry at evil lacks enthusiasm for good. The nature that is incapable of being touched with generous and righteous indignation is so, generally, either because it lacks fire and emotion altogether, or because its vigour has been dissolved into a lazy indifference, and easy good nature which it mistakes for love. It is one of the strengths of man that he shall be able to glow with indignation at evil.

II. Look at the compassion which goes with our Lord's anger here. "Being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." The somewhat singular word rendered here "grieved" may either simply imply that this sorrow co-existed with the anger, or it may describe the sorrow as being sympathy or compassion. I am disposed to take it in the latter application; and so the lesson that we gather from these words is the blessed thought that Christ's wrath was all blended with compassion and sympathetic sorrow. The scribes and Pharisees had very little notion that there was anything about them to compassionate. But the thing which in the sight of God makes the true evil of men's condition is not their circumstances, but their sins. The one thing to weep for when we look at the world is not its misfortunes, but its wickedness. Men are divided into two classes in their way of looking at wickedness in this world—one set rigid and stern, and crackling

into wrath; the other set placid and good-natured, and ready to weep over it as a calamity and misfortune and the like, but afraid or unwilling to say, "These poor creatures are to be blamed as well as pitied." We have to make an effort to keep in the centre, and never to look round in anger, unsoftened by pity, nor in pity, enfeebled by being separated from righteous indignation.

III. Note the occasion for both the sorrow and the anger. "Being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." And what was hardening their hearts? It was He! Why were their hearts being hardened? Because they were looking at Him, His graciousness, His goodness, and His power, and were steeling themselves against Him, opposing to His grace and tenderness their own obstinate determination. Nothing so tends to harden a man's heart to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as religious formalism.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, Oct. 23rd, 1884.

REFERENCES: iii. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1,893; J. S. Exell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 374; J. J. Goadby, *Ibid.*, vol. xvii., p. 200; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 226; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 539; B. F. Westcott, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 461.

Chap. iii., vers. 7, 8.—"But Jesus withdrew Himself with His disciples to the sea," etc.

I. THERE is a time to withdraw from opponents.

II. Withdrawment is not necessarily the result of cowardice.

III. Withdrawment from one sphere should be followed by entrance into another. Great things draw great multitudes. How did Christ exercise His influence over great throngs? (1) He never lowered the moral tone of His teaching. (2) He was never unequal to the increasing demands made upon His power. (3) He never requested the multitude to help Him in any selfish endeavours.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 69.

REFERENCES: iii. 7-9.—Parker, *Christian Commonwealth*, vol. vii., p. 515. iii. 7-12.—J. S. Exell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 408; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. vi., p. 267. iii. 7-19.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 60. iii. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1,529. iii. 9.—Todd, *Lectures to Children*, p. 140; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. ii., p. 291. iii. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 841. iii. 13.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 254. iii. 13, 14.—Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 311. iii. 13-19.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. vi., p. 337; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*,

p. 30. iii. 14.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. i., p. 29. iii. 17.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 381. iii. 20, 21.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 48. iii. 20-30.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 65. iii. 22-30.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 190.

Chap. iii., vers. 22-26.

Christ now encounters open hostility in addition to friendly, though mischievous remonstrance. A theory of explanation was proposed by the scribes. Christ's answer to that theory shows (1) that the opinions of leading minds may be entirely fallacious; and (2) that common sense often suggests the best answer to fanciful theories respecting the work of Christ. Christ's whole answer turned upon the common sense of His position. He does not plead authority; nor does He plead exemption from the ordinary laws of thought and service; He simply puts in the plea of common sense.

Parker, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 70.

Chap. iii., ver. 27.—"No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house."

The world, or, to reduce the subject to what is equally true, and perhaps more practical, every one's own heart, is—we have the authority of Christ to say it—"a house" or a palace, which Satan, as a strong man, holds and keeps. So long as the strong man holds his palace on an undisputed tenure, it is all quiet; his goods are in peace. But when Christ, who is represented as the stronger One, comes, there is warfare—warfare to the death; and thus warfare in the breast is the first, and for a long while the only, token for good. There are three stages, then. We will take them in their order.

I. First, "the strong man armed keepeth his palace." The strong one—none know how strong, but those who try to escape and break off his tyranny—so strong, that his strength is unseen, while in stillness and in silence he holds his own; so strong that the greatest determination of the most strong-minded man, unaided, trying to break any one of those many bonds, would be as if he were to try to uproot a mountain.

II. But the stronger comes, and now the fighting begins. Unknown to you, the stronger is binding the strong one. Heavy blasts blew, bitter winds came, and severe discipline and desolating bereavements fell upon you; but they were never meant to

hurt you; they were to kill the strong one, the power of evil that is in you.

III. Now mark the spoil. He will bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house. The habit of sin broken, the power of sin reduced, the love of sin destroyed—the soul is emancipated; and now Christ is free to claim His own property, which His own blood has purchased, and His own right hand has rescued. Has He not a right? Are not all the spoils His? So once, two thousand years ago, when He had gained the victory over the whole world by His death, and when He had led captivity captive "up to the highest heaven," He took His seat before the throne, and distributed to men, from His royal greatness, the good things which, by that death, He had redeemed from Satan's grasp. Then, the outpourings of the day of Pentecost—then the largesses of pardon, life, grace, joy, wisdom, service, love, heaven, which from His throne He is always pouring upon men. He had bound the strong man on Calvary. He had restored the property to the lawful owner, and then He ascended into the heaven of heavens, and "divided the spoils."

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 1867, p. 45.

Human life as affected by two different forces.

I. The strong enemy.

II. The strong friend. Man must be under one or other of these forces, the enemy or the friend. Those who continue under the devil will share the ruin to which he is doomed. When Satan's head is bruised, all who are in Satan's empire will be crushed.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 71.

REFERENCES: iii. 27.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 6th series, p. 292. iii. 28-30.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iii., p. 321; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 110; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 207. iii. 30.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 68.

Chap. iii., vers. 31-35.

NOTE:—

I. The spirituality of Christ's relationships. The kinship of the body is held subordinate to the kinship of the spirit.

II. The true bond of communion with Christ is obedience to God's will. (1) There is but one infallible will. (2) That will appeals for universal obedience.

III. The privileges resulting from communion with Christ.

(*a*) Intimate relationship—mother, sister, brother. (*b*) Social communion—this is the family idea.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 71.

REFERENCES: iii. 31-35.—*Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 428; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 70; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 372. iii. 34, 35.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 33. iii. 35.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. ii., p. 246. iv. 1-12.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 75. iv 1-20.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ix., p. 331. iv. 1-34.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 41.

Chap. iv., vers. 3, 4.—"Behold, there went out a sower to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up."

WASTE.

The sower went out to sow, and, as he sowed, there was a great waste. Much precious seed fell, to his right hand and to his left, on ground unprepared to receive it. Ground hard as the nether millstone was one part of the surface on which the germ of food and life fell. It lay there for a few moments, more or less, but it sank not in, it found no receptive, no digestive, no assimilating power in the earth on which it lighted; it was caught away and devoured, and the act of sowing was all that it ever knew of a harvest.

I. The text teaches us to regard waste of all kinds as a great fault and sin. Wasted food, wasted money, wasted health, wasted time, wasted opportunities of doing and receiving good, these, in their several ways, are all sins against God and our own souls.

II. Observe that, sinful as waste of any kind is in us, there is in nature, in providence, in the spiritual world, a constant waste going on, suggesting much of anxious and painful wonder. In nature, might we not almost say that for one thing used, ten are wasted? for every seed brought to maturity in plant or tree, ten perish and are defeated? for every human body preserved through the accidents and risks of life to complete its term of earthly existence, ten fall prematurely into disease and decay, and are abruptly cut off from that amount of enjoyment and of usefulness which might seem, theoretically at least, to be the birthright and inheritance of all into whose nostrils has once been breathed the creative breath of life? Would we could stop here! would that we could ascribe only

to that part of God's operations which we call nature, or at the utmost to that part of God's operations which we call providence, the manifestation of that principle of which we are speaking. But in the spiritual world also—it is the saddest sight of all—we seem to see it in its fullest development. How much of truth—precious life-giving truth—have we trifled away in our short lifetimes! Let us awake to a better appreciation of the gift of the Word of life, that we may at last hear unto profiting, and believe to the saving of our souls.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 304.

REFERENCES: iv. 3.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Septuagesima to Ash-Wednesday*, p. 151. iv. 3-9.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 50.

Chap. iv., vers. 7, 18, 19.—"And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit," etc.

PROSPERITY a Trial.

I. The growing occupation of time, although apt to be overlooked, is one of the most serious dangers of prosperity; for usually money is not made, social circumstances are not made, influence of any kind is not gotten among our fellow men, without great efforts. He who seeks these things, as a rule, you may depend upon it, rises early, sits up late, and eats the bread of carefulness. One of the chief dangers of a state of general prosperity, especially when that prosperity is in a growing state, is the constant tendency to the entire occupation of time with merely secular duties, which may be done in a religious spirit, but which will be done in a religious spirit with more and still more difficulty if there are not select and express times for the purpose of refreshing.

II. Is it not very evident that if the time, which rightfully should be devoted to the care and cultivation of religion expressly, be unwarrantably abridged, and other subjects and interests, social or what not, engross the attention and fill the heart, is it not very evident that when the time comes, the inclination and spiritual taste for religious improvement may be very much abated? Spiritual things prove dim and hazy; the busy labours of the day are succeeded by the slumbers of the night; and bargains, and speculations, and gains and losses, will form the subject even of the man's dreams and visions in the night. "The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things, entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful."

III. The third danger to be apprehended from a growing prosperity is the increase of pride.

IV. Closely associated with this danger comes another; that of self-indulgence, an easy, soft, luxurious temper.

V. Worldly success has a tendency to lead to what we usually understand and I think fairly describe, without uncharitableness, as a worldly life, that is, a life occupied with transitory things, a life from which spiritual religion is, to a considerable extent, excluded altogether, a life without religious hope, a life without God in the world.

A. RALEIGH, *Penny Pulpit* (New series), No. 96.

REFERENCES: iv. 7, 18, 19.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 65. iv. 11.—*Ibid.*, vol. iii., p. 111. iv. 13-25.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 80. iv. 14-20.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 234. iv. 16, 17.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. ii., p. 49. iv. 20-29.—W. Hubbard, *Christian World Pulpit*, p. 45. iv. 21.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 353. iv. 21, 22.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol i., p. 130. iv. 21-24.—*Ibid.*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 149. iv. 21-25.—*Ibid.*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 372.

Chap. iv., vers. 22, 23.—"For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear."

THE Manifestation of Hidden Things.

I. We all know that such is necessarily the imperfectness of human legislation, that a great deal of crime passes undiscovered, and that what is discovered often goes unpunished; and whilst an active system of government represses or prevents much wickedness, its unavoidable incapacity of finding out all crime and fastening it upon the perpetrator, encourages many to commit it with the hope of impunity. There is hardly anything so widely powerful in the encouragement to sin as the expectation of concealment. It is virtually this which produces the chief mass of wrong-doing.

II. There is not one of us who would not be thoroughly shocked at having what passes through his mind in a single day laid bare for public inspection. And yet there is nothing hid that shall not be revealed—revealed either as ground of accusation against those brought to Christ's bar, or as material of vindication of the sentences which have been passed. In either case, what hope have you of escape. Look on the right hand, look on the left; what is to hide you from wrath, when

the disclosed impurity of a thought is all that is needed to provoke its visitation. No living man can endure such a scrutiny, unless he have applied to his conscience that blood which "cleanseth from all sin"; and surely therefore there is no one who can be easy in the prospect of such a scrutiny, until he has prepared for it by making Christ his Advocate with the Father.

III. All of you can understand and appreciate the motive to right doing, which we thus fetch from the sublime scenes of the last great assize. If the certainty of being found out would keep you from crime, if the shame of being detected in anything vile and dishonourable help to make you shun what would forfeit good opinion, then believe and remember, that when the Lord cometh, He will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,096.

REFERENCES: iv. 24.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 59; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 113. iv. 24, 25.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 119. iv. 26.—F. W. Robertson, *The Human Race*, p. 71.

Chap. iv., vers. 26, 27.

MYSTERIOUS growth.

We little think how much is always going on in what we may call the underground of life; and how much more we have to do with those secret processes which underlie everything, than might at first sight appear.

I. For we are all, whether we realize it or not, always casting seeds, and those seeds, dead though they look, are always alive. Every word we say, every act we do, goes down into somebody's mind, and lives there; and there it has its influence. To what an awful consideration this might turn.

II. You look at a man to-day, and you see nothing in him. You may look at him to-morrow, and there is a change in that man, evident, palpable. The bud may be either just peeping, or the fruit may be full burst, just as God pleases. But it will come in its time; it will come out in a distinct view; it will be as the stars wake up at even; it will be as Jesus rose unseen from His grave. If you begin to ask the when and the where and the why and the how, I can only say, "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bring the forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that

the full corn in the ear." It is very kind of God to give us this wide margin of thought, seeing His own work in the heart is such a long hidden thing. And who can tell where, at this moment, it may be going on, under the most unlikely surface. It is a good thing to have a faith in every one's salvation, and so to regard and treat everybody hopefully, honourably. Who knows, if the process be so very far out of sight, whether it is not going on in any one at this moment. Fathers and mothers, who have cast the early seed, you have slept for very sorrow, and many a day, and many a night, you have risen up to see what has come of all your sowing in your child's heart. But you see nothing. Wait on. It may be all there. And the springing and the growing will be you know not where, and you know not how.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 1865, No. 33.

REFERENCES: iv. 26-27.—J. Burton, *Christian Life and Truth*, p. 203; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 185. iv. 20, 27.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 6th series, p. 68.

Chap. iv., vv. 26-29.—"And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed in o the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how," etc.

WE have in this parable: I. A most simple, yet striking representation of the business, and, at the same time, the helplessness of the spiritual husbandman. To the ministers of the Gospel, who are the great moral labourers in the field of the world, there is entrusted the task of preparing the soil and casting in the seed. And if they bring to the task all the fidelity and all the diligence of intent and single-eyed labourers, if by a faithful publication of the grand truths of the Gospel they throw in the seed of the Word, why, they have reached the boundary of their office, and the boundary also of their strength, and are to the full as powerless in the making the seed germinate, as the husbandman in the causing the valley to stand thick with corn. "It springeth and groweth up, he knoweth not how."

II. But if we are ignorant of the mode, we are well acquainted with the result. "The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself,"—not through the skill of the tiller, but through the virtues wherewith God has endowed her—"first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear." You have here an account of the successive stages of long experience. (1) There is first the convert in the young days of his godliness—the green

blades just breaking through the soil, and giving witness to the germination of the seed. This is ordinarily a season of great promise. We have not, and we look not for, the rich fruit of a matured well-disciplined piety, but we have the glow of verdant profession, everything looks fresh. (2) Next comes the ear; this is a season of weariness and of watching. Sometimes there will be long intervals without any perceptible growth; sometimes the corn will look sickly, as though blasted by the mildew; sometimes the storm will rush over it and almost level it with the earth. All this takes place in the experience of the Christian. (3) "When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle." When we look on aged believers, who appear to have been long ago fitted to depart hence and to be with the Lord, we almost marvel that they have not been called home, and that God still exercises them by the discipline of affliction. But of this we may be sure—the ear is not full, otherwise it would be plucked. H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,988.

THE Seed growing secretly.

I. The work of sowing and the joy of reaping advance simultaneously on the spiritual field. The labour of the husbandman in the natural sphere is all and only sowing at one season, all and only reaping at another; the seed of the Word affords a difference of experience; in the kingdom of God there is no period of the year when you must not sow or may not reap. These two processes are in experience very closely linked together. They become alternately and reciprocally cause and effect; if we were not permitted at an early period to reap a little, the work of sowing would proceed languidly, or altogether cease; on the other hand, if we cease to sow, we shall not long continue to reap. When the workmen are introduced into this circle, it carries them continuously round.

II. In any given spot in the field there may be sowing in spring, and yet no reaping in harvest. If there is not sowing, there will be no reaping, but the converse does not hold good; you cannot say, wherever there has been sowing it will be followed by a reaping. The seed may be carried away by wild birds, or wither on stony ground, or be choked by thorns.

III. The growth of the sown seed is secret; secret also is its failure. It is quite true, there may be grace in the heart of a neighbour unseen, unsuspected by me; but the heart of my neighbour may be graceless, while I am in its earlier stages ignorant of the fact.

IV. Though the sower is helpless after he has cast the seed into the ground, he should not be hopeless; we know that the seed is a living thing, and will grow except where it is impeded by extraneous obstacles.

V. In every case the harvest, in one sense, will come; on every spot of all the field there will be a reaping. If one set of ministers do not reap there, another will. Where there is not conversion, there will be condemnation. The regeneration is one harvest; the judgment is another. The angels are not sowers, but they are reapers.

W. ARNOT, *The Parables of our Lord*, p. 312.

I. THOUGH the sower sleep after his labour, yet the process of germination goes on night and day.

II. Simple beginnings and practical results may be connected by mysterious processes: "he knoweth not how." There is a point in Christian work where knowledge must yield to mystery.

III. As the work of the sower is assisted by natural processes, so the seed of truth is aided by the natural conscience and aspiration which God has given to all men.

IV. The mysteriousness of processes ought not to deter from reaping the harvest. The spiritual labourer may learn from the husbandman. PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 81.

REFERENCES: iv. 26-29.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1,603; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 84; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 186; W. M. Taylor, *Parables of our Saviour*, p. 196; A. B. Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 117.

Chap. iv., vers. 26-33.—"And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how," etc.

CHRIST'S Idea of Christianity.

I. The kingdom of God, or the beginning of a truly religious life in the soul of a man, may be obscure, imperceptible and unconscious. When a man is building a house he sees it as it goes on. That is an outside matter. A man goes into his garden and plants seed. He may sit up all night with spectacles and a lantern, but he will not see anything going on; and yet there is something going on which is vitally connected with the whole operation of vegetable development. So is it with the spiritual life. The work of God in the human soul is gradual. Further, the working of religion in the human soul is not

scattering, accidental, promiscuous, just as it may happen. It has its regular stages, and one will not precede the other except in the order of these stages. First the blade, then the ear, then the kernel in the ear, and you cannot make one of them anticipate the others so that they will not follow in that sequence.

II. Conversion is often an imperceptible condition. That is, when a man is converted in the old-fashioned understanding of that word, when he has passed from death to life, when the balance is struck, and it is for purity, for holiness, for obedience to God, for love; he may not know it. Unconscious piety is simply this, the being trained from your cradle by your surrounding circumstances into those very moods and into that very purpose of life which conversion means. It is being inwardly changed, away from animal toward spiritual life; away from the law of selfishness toward the law of a true love. The moment a man can have the testimony of himself that that is his purpose, though not his attainment, then he is converted, though he may not know it.

H. W. BEECHER, *Christian World Pulpit*, p. 120.

REFERENCE: iv. 27, 28.—W. G. Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 209.

Chap. iv., vers. 28, 29.—"For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

THE seed cast into the ground is undoubtedly to be understood of the knowledge of good which may be at any time laid before the mind of another. We have an opportunity, it may be, of doing this; a person is with us for a certain time, and then perhaps is removed from us; we must even leave the seed to itself and go on our way trusting that God in His good providence will preserve it, and make it spring up in its season.

I. It may be asked, What is the lesson we are to learn from this? for it is not the custom of our Lord merely to state a thing as a matter of fact actually occurring in life, unless there may be something derived from it practically useful. And we cannot suppose that He means to advise us to be careless, to take no pains of our own, but to leave the event wholly to God. Undoubtedly it does not mean this; for how does our Lord represent Himself? As the gardener digging about and dressing the barren fig-tree, in the hope that it might perhaps at last

bring forth fruit. And what Christ teaches us in one parable will never contradict what He teaches us in another. Let the two parables teach us different lessons, each making that of the other complete. We should do all that we can do, and then leave the event to God with confidence. To provide for the future by any present act is wise and good; but to be anxious about the future, where no act of ours can affect it, is a weakness and a want of faith. The parable of the fig-tree teaches us the first, the parable of the growth of the corn while men slept, teaches us the foolishness of the second.

II. But together with a vain anxiety, the parable also condemns a vain impatience. "The earth brought forth first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." Each in its own order, but not all at once, and still less the last first. What we should look for in the spring is promise, in the summer and autumn, it is performance. What should disappoint us is to find these wanting; it were a strange folly that should seek in summer for the fresh leaves and delicate flowers of spring, or in spring should require the deep foliage and abundant fruits of summer.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 140.

THE Seed growing secretly.

I. In this passage we have a striking picture of the silent growth of God's word, whether in the individual, or in the Church at large. *So is the kingdom of God:* not different, but exactly similar in its development to the process by which food is brought out of the earth. The sower does not meddle with the seed when once it is in the ground. He does not, after a week or a month, go to the field and take up the seed, and look if it be growing. No; but he leaves it there, confident that it has a quickening power in itself, and that in due time it will break through the clods and spring up and bear fruit. And this should teach us to have faith in the power of God's Word, which His ministers sow in the hearts of their hearers. It should teach us patience; it should teach us to wait in faith, till the Word we sow has had time; it should increase our faith in the power of the Word to grow of itself, when once it has been received.

II. And this growing of itself is further set forth in the words that follow—"For the earth bringeth forth of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." You cannot hurry the growth of a seed of corn. It must have

time and its own time. It must go through the several stages of its appointed growth. Nor is it otherwise with the seed sown in our hearts, the Word of God, the Gospel, the teaching of Jesus Christ. There must be in the young a growth in grace, a gradual going forwards. We must not expect to see in them a wisdom and a goodness which belong only to a riper age.

III. Let us bear in mind for our warning that what God requires in all the plants of His sowing is fruit-return for the care bestowed. He showers down upon the soul the dew of His blessing. He gives us largely in this country every means of grace, that we may grow thereby, and in return He expects fruit. He expects that we, thus highly favoured, should not be barren and unprofitable, but should bring forth fruit unto Him—fruit that shall remain, fit to be stored in the heavenly garner—fruit unto life eternal.

R. D. B. RAWNSLEY, *Sermons in Country Churches*, 2nd series, p. 130.

REFERENCES: iv. 28.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 72; R. Tuck, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 164; G. Litting, *Thirty Children's Sermons*, p. 205.

Chap. iv., ver. 30.—"And He said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?"

THE kingdom of God is not the Church, but a far wider, vast, outlying region; where Jehovah's omnipotence and wisdom—with, indeed, all His glorious attributes—reign absolutely. The Church is the centre of this kingdom; the kingdom, the outlying territory of the Church.

I. This doctrine of the kingdom of God as distinct from the Church will assist us in the interpretation of many passages of Scripture, and notably of our Lord's parables. To take one instance, there is the question whether the Church in any given land ought to include all the inhabitants within its fellowship; or to exclude those of wicked, sinful life. Men turn to the parable of the tares, in which it is said, "Let both grow together until the harvest," and argue that Christ has absolutely forbidden the exercise of discipline and the removal of wicked men from the Church. This might be correct if the Lord had said, "To what shall we liken the Church of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?" Instead of that, He said, "The field is the world"—not the Church.

II. This doctrine of the kingdom of God as distinct from the Church, will assist us in our estimate of things sacred and secular. Many things outside the Church are yet inside the kingdom. Many things belong to God that have nothing to do with the Gospel. The commerce and manufactures of Great Britain are as much God's gifts to us for His service and praise as were Bethlehem's fields to Jesse. The science and marvellous discoveries of the nineteenth century are as directly Jehovah's bestowments upon us as were the abundance of the sea and the treasures hid in the sand His blessings upon Zebulon.

III. The doctrine of the distinction between the kingdom of God and the Church will assist us to overcome the irreligiousness with which we deal with earthly things.

IV. The doctrine of the distinction between the kingdom of God and the Church will assist us to appreciate the greatness of our privileges as members of the Church of Christ. Wherefore has the kingdom of God the Church for its centre, but that she may be stored with privileges and blessings that shall regenerate the world. As were the Apostles to the Church, so is the Church to Christendom. The Church is the army of liberation for this sin-worn desolated world.

A. DAVIES, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 269.

REFERENCE: iv. 30.—A. Davies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., pp. 252, 269.

Chap. iv., vers. 30-32.—**"And He said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed," etc.**

I. OBSERVE the minuteness of the seed which is ordinarily first deposited by God's Spirit in man's heart. If you examine the records of Christian biography, you will find, so far as it is possible to search out such facts, that conversion is commonly to be traced to inconsiderable beginnings, a single word, a solitary verse, a casual expression, one of these it is which, in the vast variety of cases, settles down into the heart, and after lying buried there a year it may be, or two years, or ten years, it will suddenly and unexpectedly vegetate, so that the forgotten and apparently dead grain shoots into a plant of conversion and righteousness.

II. The parable under review is an accurate figure of the religion of Jesus Christ, when considered in respect of its spreading over all the earth. It has been sometimes thought that

there lies an evidence against the Divine origin of Christianity, in the fact of the inconsiderable progress that it has hitherto made among men. We think, calculating probabilities by our imperfect arithmetic, that Christianity, as soon as published, might have been expected to start into unlimited empire. But the Bible gives no countenance to such an expectation. On the contrary, a season of depression and disaster, and occasionally almost extinction,—introductory, indeed, but at long distance, to a season of strength and glory—this is throughout the Scriptures a Scriptural representation. The parable before us agrees in all its main features with those ordinarily given in Scripture. The imagery drawn from our fields and gardens will always suggest the idea of a difficult and interrupted growth. As a general rule, vegetable productions pass through so many positions of danger ere they reach their maturity, that likening the text to a kingdom or dispensation will always suggest, if not actually require, the idea that such a kingdom or such a dispensation can only reach its greatness or its fulness by passing through long stages of difficulty or hindrance.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,907.

I. SMALL beginning may have great endings. (*a*) This should encourage all holy labourers. (*b*) This should alarm all wicked men.

II. Vitality is more than magnitude. (*a*) This applies to creeds; (*b*) to church agencies or organisations; (*c*) to a public profession of faith.

III. The least thing in nature is a better illustration of Divine truth than the greatest object in art. The least of all seeds more fitly represents the kingdom of heaven than the most elaborate of all statuary.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 82.

REFERENCES: iv. 30-32.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 472. iv. 30-34.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 89.

Chap. iv., vers. 33, 34.—"And with many such parables spake He the word unto them, as they were able to hear it."

THIS text may be used as supplying three lessons as to the duties of the Christian teacher.

I. He must adapt himself to his hearers.

II. He must consider his hearers rather than himself.

III. He must increase his communication of truth and light according to the progress of his scholars.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 82.

REFERENCES: iv. 33-34.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1,669. iv. 34.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 6th series, p. 191. iv. 34-41.—*Homilist*, vol. iv., p. 177.

Chap. iv., ver. 35.—"The even was come."

VEILED under some real fact in our Lord's life on earth, lie all the revelations of His will in faith and doctrine concerning His Church and His children throughout the ages; so I seem to trace the spiritual teaching of Advent under the storm that befel the disciples on the lake long ago.

I. As I see the time when this took place, I learn something. It was eventide—nay, it was more than that—it was eventide when these disciples braced the halyards and drew up the brown sail, and gave the prow of their little vessel to the setting sun; but at the crisis of the story it was more than eventide—it was night; the hours had sped on, twilight so short in those eastern lands had slipped suddenly away; not alone a storm, but darkness had overtaken these disciples. So with us now the time as of old is eventide; the ages have slipped by and we are standing here, heirs of all the ages past, nearer the time than when we believed. It is eventide with us, and it is something more—darkness has overtaken us also.

II. From this darkness on the lake I learn another thing. The darknesses of our holy religion—its mysteries, its sacraments—make Christ to be prized even more highly than if our faith existed without such darkness and such shrouds. In the dark shadow of these mysteries sits Jesus Christ. It was so of old. It is so now. These disciples, sitting in the setting sun, with light all around them, with no storm battling against their sails; no darkness around them; nothing to hide Christ from them;—think you it was good for them; nay that they half realized what they realized of their Master when loosing their vessel, they swept across the sea of Galilee, and entered the darkness; spent the night with Him; discovered the mystery of His hidden presence? I think not; but when they had thus proceeded, how different it was with them. The darkness came; did it take Christ away? nay, it brought Him nearer as their helper. The night fell; it shrouded Him, but it took not Christ away; dearer and closer their yokefellow in danger; it

was the reason that he rose up at their greatest need and cried His great words of "Peace, be still."

W. MELLER, *Village Homilies*, p. 9.

REFERENCES: iv. 35, 36.—A. G. Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 309. iv. 35-39.—Parker, *Cavendish Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 47.

Chap. iv., vers. 35- 1.

THERE are various instances in Sacred Scripture of the effect produced by the revelation of God to man, sometimes by mere power, sometimes by terror, sometimes, as in the drama of Job, by a long discourse of natural history. But here it was the mercifulness, the sympathy, the succour which were manifested, that touched the hearts of the disciples. He came to their rescue; and although the wonder of His power over great natural laws was not without its effect, yet that which seems to have touched them and filled them all the rest of their lives, was the sense that He was their protector, their Saviour.

I. Everyone comes first or last to God, through tribulation. There never was a people that lived and flourished on the earth, outside of a fable, who did not need a God of compassion. Taking the human race comprehensively, the whole world has been in a condition that no other than such a Deity could possibly fit, or endure, either the measurement or the morality which has been inspired by the Gospel. Consider what poverty has done and is doing all over the world. Go inside of men, and see what a torment is the sense of right and wrong, of unaccomplished rectitude, of unfulfilled vows, and of purpose ignobly wasted. Men, looking at them in their very best conditions, as in modern developed society, are continually in need of somebody to be willing to help them; and the mischief is, that according to our ideas of the laws of nature and the laws of grace, men feel, I dare not ask for help. What am I that I should? But if there could break out from heaven a voice, saying, "Not because you are rich, but because of your poverty; not by reason of your worth, but by reason of your misery, I will help you?" The very conception of the love of God under such circumstances—how much light it brings to despairing souls.

II. The doctrine of the compassion of God, of the compassion of Christ, I think, has been the salvation of the Bible, of the Church and of faith; and every limitation of it is a peril. The Christ in art has mostly perished. There was a time when men spoke by art, carved, built, painted; and there are certain

ages in which the idea of art conveys more really the living thought of the age than anything that is recorded in book of history. That has gone by long ago, and the glory of Christ, and the thoughts of men about Christ, are diffusing themselves throughout the whole Christian world. Christ in humanity, Christ in sympathy for others, that has become the Christ of our age. That amelioration has been going on in barbarous countries and among civilised nations. That different conception of the outcast and criminal classes; that hopefulness of reformation under certain possible conditions of mind; that general kindness and tenderness even to those whom society must banish frequently from itself; the recognition of the brotherhood of men—that is Christ at the present time, working into actual affairs, and leavening the whole lump.

H. W. BEECHER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 51.

I. WE see here the organised Church in peril—Christ and His disciples were all in this tempest.

II. Dangers beset the Church even whilst it is carrying out the express commands of Christ.

III. The spirit of Christ, not the body of Christ, must save the Church in all peril.

IV. Jesus Christ answers the personal appeal of the imperilled Church.

V. All the perils of the Church may be successfully encountered by profound faith in God.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 82.

REFERENCES: iv. 35-41.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 94; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 95; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p 248; *Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 136. iv. 36.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 258.

Chap. iv., vers. 36-38.—**"They took Him even as He was in the ship . . . and He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow."**

THE toiling Christ.

Among the many loftier characteristics belonging to Christ's life and work, there is a very homely one which is often lost sight of; and that is, the amount of hard physical exertion, prolonged even to fatigue and exhaustion, which He endured. "They took Him even as He was into the ship." And many expositors suppose that in the very form of that phrase there is suggested the extreme of weariness and exhaustion which He suffered, after the hard day's toil. Whether that be so or

not, the swiftness of the move to the little boat, and His going on board without a moment's preparation, leaving the crowd on the beach, seems most naturally accounted for by supposing that He had come to the last point of physical endurance, and that his frame, worn out by the hard day's work, needed one thing—rest.

I. First, let me point out some of the significant hints which the Gospel records give us of the toilsomeness of Christ's service. We are chiefly indebted for these to the Gospel of Mark. Note (1) how distinctly this Gospel gives the impression of swift, strenuous work. The narrative is brief and condensed. There is one word which is reiterated over and over again in the earlier chapters, remarkably conveying this impression of haste and strenuous work. Mark's favourite word is "straightway," "immediately," "forthwith," "anon," which are all translations of one expression. The story seems as it were to pant with haste, to keep up with Him as He moves among men, swift as the sunbeam and continuous in the outflow of His love as these unceasing rays. (2) Again, we see in Christ's service, toil prolonged to the point of actual physical exhaustion. (3) We see in Christ toil that puts aside the claims of physical wants. (4) We see in Christ's service a love which is at every man's beck and call, a toil cheerfully rendered at the unreasonable and unseasonable times.

II. Notice how we get from our Lord's own words a glimpse into the springs of this wonderful activity. There are three points which distinctly come out in various places of the Gospels as His motives for such unresting sedulousness and continuance of toil. (1) The first is conveyed in such words as these, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me." "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." All these express one thought. Christ lived and toiled and bore weariness and exhaustion, because wherever He went, and whatsoever He set His hand to, He had the one consciousness of a great task laid upon Him by a loving Father, whom He loved, and whom, therefore, it was His joy and His blessedness to serve. (2) And still further, another of the secret springs that move His unwearied activity, His heroism of toil, is the thought expressed in such words as these, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." "The night cometh when no man can work." He recognised the brief hour of sunny life as being an hour that must be filled with

service, and recognised the fact that there was a task that He could only do when He lived the life of a man upon earth. (3) And there was a final motive which I need barely touch. He was impelled to His sedulous service by the motive expressed in such words as these, in which this Gospel is remarkably rich, "Jesus, *moved with compassion*, put forth His hand and touched him."

IV. So much for the motive; and now a word finally as to the worth of this toil for us. What do we learn from His example? (1) Task all your capacity, and use every minute in doing the thing that is plainly set before you to do. (2) We may bring the greatest principles to bear on the smallest duties. (3) We learn the possible harmony of communion and service.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons preached in Manchester*, 3rd series, p. 273.

Chap. iv., ver. 38.—"And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow."

I. LOOK at the illustrious sleeper. The greatest of all slept. Thus was He in all points like unto His brethren; the substance of His body was wasted and was repaired, renewed and restored by food; the brain and nerves were exhausted, and their power was renewed by sleep. A morbid piety and a false morality find virtue in wakefulness, when nature preaches forgetfulness and demands repose. Religion is rather in going to sleep when Nature has need of slumber, than in a forced watchfulness for its sake. Doubtless, Christ was often weary, and now we see Him at rest. He sleeps after the hard work of a very busy day. To cease from labour is as much a duty as to work; rest is pure and holy and good, when in season. To everything there is a season and a time, for every purpose under heaven there is a time to rest. He who, in his working, works the work of God, and does God's will instead of his own, will see the season for rest, and will have the hour for rest.

II. This sleep of Jesus, the Man and the Christ of God, in the storm, was natural, and not in any sense forced or artificial; but it presents two things—first, the complete exhaustion of the body of Jesus, and secondly, the sweet and perfect peace of His spirit. Safe from evil and from every fear, He must live until of His work it could be said, "It is done." He will die, but not now; He will be killed, but not by the storm; He will go to the grave, but will not find His tomb in the depths of

the sea. In the fulness of time He will die, and by means fixed in the foreknowledge, and predetermined in the counsel of God. Until that day He will deliver Him from all evil—God will guard His soul. He was in the hinder part of the ship asleep.

III. In the case before us, the disciples were awake, the Master was sleeping. Now, the Master sleeps not, slumbers not, and the disciples may, in season, safely, quietly, peacefully sleep. Let Christ be with you always, with you everywhere—with you at all times, with you in all circumstances. Seek to be conscious of His presence, and you will not only be safe, but you will feel blessed.

S. MARTIN, *Penny Pulpit* (New series), No. 389.

Chap. iv., ver. 38.—"Master, carest Thou not that we perish?"

THE Sympathy of God and Necessity of Man.

I. It cannot be denied that there are many facts and many experiences in the life of this world, which irresistibly suggest the question whether God can be waking, or if wakeful, caring. To try to enumerate such phenomena is as needless as it would be painful. We cannot but read this sleep of Jesus Christ in the boat, tossed by the waves, with His disciples standing by, wondering and half murmuring, as intended to represent the world-wide, age-long mystery to which we are pointing.

II. The sympathy of God is more vital to us even than His omnipotence. The disciples accepted the perishing—in other words, the non-intervention of Christ to save—what they could not accept was His not caring. In its influence upon the heart, to care is more than to save. Love is more than power, even in the Divine. Far better would it be for us, as spiritual and immortal beings, to imagine that there might be some opposing and thwarting impediment in the way of the present exercise of God's attribute of omnipotence, than that there should be any defect or any coldness in His love. And when a man has made up his mind at all costs to believe in the Divine care for him, he will find, as he casts himself day by day upon that love and that compassion that, for him at all events, however it may be for the universe, the power is already sufficient too. Beginning with the axiom, "Thou, God, carest," he passes on into the experimental conviction, "There is none like unto Thee, O Lord, there is not one that can do as Thou doest."

III. "Carest thou not?" has a voice for the disciple as well as for the Master. It reproves the lazy loitering, the purposeless

sauntering, the silly dreaming, in which so many of us pilgrims and voyagers pass this responsible, this anxious lifetime. Not to care that we perish is suicide; not to care that our brother perishes is murder. Christ cared, God cared, that we might care; and yet, as I look within, as I look around me, I find almost nothing that expresses, almost nothing that is consistent with this anxiety. I see lives given to this one thing, the making themselves easy, soft and luxurious. "Give me one serious man" was the French statesman's challenge. "Give me one," we will echo it, "who cares if he himself, cares if his brother perishes."

C. J. VAUGHAN, *University Sermons*, p. 305.

REFERENCES: iv. 38.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1,121. iv. 39.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 77. iv. 39, 40.—J. H. Thom, *Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ*, p. 47. iv. 40, 41.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 138.

Chap. iv., ver. 41.—"Even the wind and the sea obey Him."

OUR Divine Saviour teaches us sometimes by deeds, sometimes by words, sometimes by silence. His silence speaks more than the words of other men; His words do more than all men's deeds together; while His deeds themselves possess moreover an infinite eloquence. We have in this miracle, as we shall see in the sequel, all these modes of teaching combined.

I. Jesus had all day long, like His own good householder, been busy, bringing forth every form and phase of truth which might comfort and forewarn His little flock. And having so done, He winds up His day by that act of marked significance which is now before us. Does He not in this parabolic miracle show to those who were the nucleus and kernel of His kingdom, to those valiant souls who were with Him in His labours and were to be with Him in His approaching trials, that let come what storm there might upon the Church and on the soul, He was with them still, and would be with them even to the end? Let us not be like that captain, who having a true and correct chart in his cabin, failed to consult it while the weather was calm, but went below to look for it only when the wind and tide had drifted his barque upon the bar, and so with his eyes upon the course he should have steered, felt the shock, which in a few moments sent them down to the abyss. Our souls are like a ship upon the deep, and as we sail over the waves of life, we must, like wary mariners, take the hints given us in our nature. If we see on the horizon a cloud of some possible temptation no

bigger than a man's hand, though all else be bright and clear, we must beware; for in that speck may couch a tempest ready to spring up and leap down upon our souls. Above all, we should always have Christ aboard with us; we should have Him formed within us as our hope of glory; under His ensign we should sail as our only hope of reaching that haven for which we are making.

II. The Church at large and the several members of the Church, like the boat in the miracle, have Him with us whom even the winds and the sea obey. Though He seem to be careless of us, is it not the fact it is we who are forgetful of Him? Though he sleeps, so to speak, that is to say, though He seem to our faithless hearts to hide Himself for a moment, His heart waketh, and a single cry to Him will let us know to our peace and joy that He is there.

W. B. PHILPOT, *Church of England Pulpit*, p. 208.

Chap. iv., ver. 41.—"What manner of man is this?"

THE Unknown Quantity in Christ.

The unknown quantity in Christ was (1) beneficent, and therefore not from beneath; (2) intensely spiritual, and therefore not of the earth, earthy; (3) wholly self-sacrificial, and therefore different from ordinary human policy and purpose; (4) it set aside canons, traditions, and standards established by men, and therefore claimed a wisdom superior to the ripest wisdom of all human teachers.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 97.

REFERENCES: iv. 41.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1,686; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 184; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ix., p. 271. iv.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 190. v. 1-10.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 99.

Chap. v., vers. 1-17.

THIS story may be viewed in four aspects.

I. The human. (*a*) The human aspect as seen in shadow: (1) Man impure—unclean spirit; (2) Man dis-socialised—his dwelling was among the tombs; (3) Man unrestrained—no man could tame him; (4) Man self-tormented. (*b*) As seen in light: (1) Man tranquillized—sitting; (2) Man civilised—clothed; (3) Man intellectualised—in his right mind.

II. The Divine. (1) Christ identified by His holiness; (2)

Christ feared for His power; (3) Christ recognised in the realm of spirit.

III. The Diabolic. (1) As showing great resources, "we are many"; (2) as displaying subordination—they besought Christ; (3) as revealing destructiveness—whatever they touch, man or beast, they destroy.

IV. (1) Society trembling under manifestations of spiritual power—"they were afraid." (2) Society caring more for beasts than for men—they prayed Him to depart out of their coasts.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 83.

REFERENCES: v. 1-20.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 190. v. 11-20.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 104.

Chap. v., vers. 15, 17.—"And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts."

I. WE learn that in our Saviour's day there was devil power at work in the world, and that it assumed various manifestations and forms more or less repulsive, agonising and destructive. This was Satan's day, his hour, and the power of darkness. And has this devil power ceased in our own day? It would be a fond delusion to suppose so. He may be gagged and pushed into the slums and back streets of a civilised community. He may assume among us the garb of an angel of light; but across the sea he has no motive for playing at such disguises. There he is as ever the open and avowed enemy of God and man.

II. We have seen in this narrative as in others, that the devils were obedient to the potent word of command which fell from the lips of Christ: "Come out of him, thou unclean spirit," and shortly afterwards the once-possessed might have been seen "sitting, clothed, in his right mind." This power and authority was relegated to His apostles by the Master also, not for a temporary purpose, or to be confined to one age or one nation, for we read that after the cross had been endured and the grave emptied, the Master said again, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. *In My name shall they cast out devils.*" We dare not explain this away and say this was a miraculous power which ceased with a miraculous age. The Gospel and the Church, which is a keeper and witness of the truth, have had this power ever since, and they have exercised it in every age, and before our eyes, and we

are witnesses that it is no sham, but a blessed reality. Every one called from darkness to light, and from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God is a witness. Christendom is a living witness, built up of lively stones, to the potency of Christ, His Gospel and His Church, over all Satanic arts and influences.

A. Cooper, *Penny Pulpit* (New series), No. 932.

References: v. 15.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 139. v. 18.—G. Calthrop, *Words Spoken to my Friends*, p. 259.

Chap. v., vers. 18-21.

I. The recollection of our Christless state should beget a spirit of distrust in ourselves. The healed man was naturally anxious to remain at the side of his healer.

II. We see here the possibility of being under the protection of Christ even though far from His physical presence. The healed man was as surely under the care of Christ when miles away as when within reach of His hand. Christ always pointed towards a spiritual reign, and both incidentally and directly discouraged trust in merely fleshly presence and power.

Parker, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 84.

References: v. 18, 19.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 163. v. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 109; H. W. Beecher, *Plymouth Pulpit Sermons*, 4th series, p. 27.

Chap. v., vers. 20, 21.

Thronging Christ and touching Christ.

Note: 1. The mighty difference, it may be a difference for us as of life and death, between thronging Jesus and touching Him. The multitude thronged Him; only this faithful woman touched Him. There was nothing to the outward eye which should distinguish between her action and theirs. Peter and the other disciples could see nothing to distinguish this woman from any other member of that eager, inquisitive, unceremonious multitude which crowded around Him, as was their wont; so that Peter, who was always ready, and sometimes too ready, with his word, is half inclined to take his Lord up and rebuke Him for asking this question, "Who touched me?" A question which had so little reason in it, seeing that the whole multitude were thronging and pressing upon Him at every moment and on every side. But Christ re-affirms and repeats

His assertion: "Somebody hath touched Me." He knew the difference, He distinguished at once, as by a Divine instinct, that believing *one* from the unbelieving many. There was that in her which put her in connection with the grace, the strength, the healing power which were in Him. Do you ask me what this was? It was faith. It was her faith. She came expecting a blessing, believing in blessing, and so finding the blessing which she expected and believed. But that careless multitude who thronged the Lord, only eager to gratify their curiosity, and to see what new wonder He would next do, as they desired nothing, expected nothing, from Him, so they obtained nothing. Empty they came, and empty they went away.

II. Is there not here the explanation of much, of only too much, in the spiritual lives of men. We are of the many that throng Jesus, not of the faithful few who touch Him. We bear a Christian name; we go through a certain round of Christian duties; we are thus brought outwardly in contact with the Lord; but we come waiting for no blessing, and so obtaining no blessing. Faith is wanting, faith, the divine hunger of the soul, the emptiness of the soul longing to be filled, and believing that it will be filled, out of God's fulness, and because this is so, therefore there goes no virtue out from Him to us; it is never given to us so to touch Him as that immediately we know in ourselves that we are whole of our plague.

R. C. TRENCH, *Sermons in Westminster Abbey*, p. 318.

Chap. v., vers. 21-43.

THE Daughter of Jairus.

This story shows us: I. The Heart of Jesus. Many are anxious to find out what the face of Jesus was like, but our concern should be to know how His heart feels towards us. If you lay your hand upon any page in the gospels, you will feel the throbbings of a heart full of wonderful pity for all sinners and sufferers. All His sayings and doings, His death and resurrection, reveal a loving kindness to which there are no bounds. As the great ocean opens its bosom to receive all the rivers, so Christ's bosom is open for all the sorrows of men. The heart of Jesus to you is the very same as it was in the house of Jairus. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

II. The Hand of Jesus. It touches the sick and dead; it is

full of power. With a mere wish, with a word at a distance, He could have healed this girl; but it was usually His way to touch those He healed. He did more than touch this girl; He firmly grasped her with His warm human hand, and she arose. He became a man, our kinsman and elder brother, that He might be near enough to touch us fully, and to touch us always.

III. The Healing of Jesus. This girl must have had strange feelings when her soul returned to the body it had recently forsaken. We are not told that she was startled or frightened. Perhaps she could say about her new life what Dr. Malan of Geneva said about his: "I was awakened as a mother awakens her child with a kiss," with all the power of God and with gentleness more than a mother's, Christ by touch and voice awoke the girl, and welcomed her back to life. Jesus has more than a touch, a tear and a kind word to give to our misery. His name declares the work to which He gave himself on earth, and gives Himself still in heaven. Jesus means healer. Nor is He like the healers in our hospitals, who must sometimes leave the healed to starve and to find hunger as cruel as disease. Christ did not heal and then leave this girl: He helped her up, and got her food. He preserves and strengthens for ever the life He gives to the soul. About the after history of this girl we are told nothing. But we are sure that she loved her healer while she had being. We readily believe that she was made Christ's by every tie of gratitude. And so our religion is a religion of gratitude for the greatest and freest favours. It is, therefore, a religion of love and joy.

J. WELLS, *Bible Children*, p. 199.

REFERENCE: v. 21-43.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 109.

Chap. v., vers. 22-24.

THE case of the ruler may be treated as showing the instructiveness of domestic affliction.

I. It shows the helplessness even of the *greatest* men—the applicant was a ruler, yet his rulership was of no avail in this case.

II. It shows the helplessness even of the *kindest* men—the applicant was a father, yet all his yearning affection was unable to suggest a remedy for his afflicted child.

III. It shows the need of Christ in every life.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 93.

REFERENCES: v. 22-43.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*,

p. 169. v. 24.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 161. v. 24-34.—*Ibid.*, *Plymouth Pulpit Sermons*, 10th series, p. 425.

Chap. v., vers. 25-27 (with Isa. xlii., ver. 3).

THE Survival of the Fittest and a Higher Law.

I. We see in this text, from Mark, the compassion of Christ for those who are, humanly speaking, incurable, as this woman was according to the medical knowledge of her age. Jesus did not say to her, "Go away; you are too weak and broken to hold your own in the world; best for you to be down and wait for the end, while others take your place who can do your work." That would have been a sorrowful word, not to her only, but to us also; for it would have set a limit, not to Christ's power merely, but to His very compassion; and therein also to ours. That, however, is not the law which human hearts acknowledge. Our power may easily have limits, but our pity must have none, and as we can help not a little even when we cannot heal, it is bound upon our conscience never to be inhuman. The bruised reed He would not break. But this, while it is the supreme law of man's nature, is by no means the law of Nature elsewhere. On the contrary, that law has been not unfairly expressed in the now familiar formula, "the survival of the fittest"—that is to say, Nature allows those only to live who are able to hold their own, and the rest she ruthlessly dooms to destruction.

II. It seems clear that the natural law of a supreme struggle for existence and survival of the fittest could never, by any process of development, grow into the moral law of self-sacrifice and supreme compassion for the weak and suffering. The whole higher life of man—whether seen in the noble magnanimity of the Gentile hero, or in the chivalry and meek suffering of the Christian,—all those virtues of compassion, gentleness and mercy, which we justly call humanity, because he who has them not is unworthy of the name of man, are all alien and opposite to the mere law of nature, and could not possibly grow out of it. However it be with our bodies, our souls are not an evolution of the brute soul—not a mere variety better fitted for the struggle.

III. I claim for man an exceptional position in God's universe, that he may be led to do the fitting works of an exceptional virtue. It is a great thing to live under a higher law than that of the brute creatures; but our guilt is only the greater if we live on like the brute. To allow the better and follow the

worse is always base; but it is doubly bad when we claim superiority in virtue of the good we allow, and yet do not practise it.

W. C. SMITH, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 177.

REFERENCES: v. 25.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 542. v. 25, 26.—*Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 256. v. 25-27.—*Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 34.

Chap. v., vers. 25-28.

THE Power of Feeble Faith.

I. We have here, first, the great lesson that very imperfect faith may be genuine faith.

II. Christ answers the imperfect faith.

III. Christ corrects and confirms an imperfect faith by the very act of answering it.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 2nd series, p. 294.

REFERENCES: v. 25-27.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in a Religious House*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 104. v. 25-28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 827.

Chap. v., vers. 25-34.

I. HUMAN extremity—the woman had suffered many years, and had spent all.

II. Human earnestness—though much people thronged the Saviour, and she was weak, yet she found her way to the Healer.

III. Divine sensitiveness. Jesus Christ knew the difference between mere pressure and the touch of loving faith.

IV. Public confession. Thankfulness should always be courageous and explicit. PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 93.

REFERENCES: v. 25-34.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 114. v. 26.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 281.

Chap. v., ver. 28.—"If I may but touch His clothes, I shall be whole."

THE spiritual value of the near and visible.

The afflicted woman did not invoke the whole power of the Godhead; she said that a mere touch was enough. She believed that the Divine element penetrated and vitalised the outward and visible covering, so much so that to touch the clothes was to touch God Himself. The idea is that we need far less proof of God's existence and beneficence than we often demand. Apply this thought.

I. To spiritual existences. If I touch but a grain of sand, I find the Mighty One.

II. To the scheme of spiritual providence. Limit the new to *one* life—touch but the hem of the garment.

III. To the processes of spiritual education.

IV. To the uses of spiritual ordinances.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 55.

REFERENCES. v. 28.—*New Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 35; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1,382. v. 29-34.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 281. v. 30.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 249; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 36. v. 30, 31.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1,640. v. 33.—*Ibid.*, vol. ix., No. 514; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., pp. 282, 283. v. 34.—*Ibid.*, p. 282. v. 35.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 31; J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 407.

Chap. v., vers. 35-43.

THIS part of the incident shows how two views may be taken of the same case.

I. There is the human view—the child is dead, trouble not the Master. Men see the outside; they deal with facts rather than with principles; they see the circumference, not the centre.

II. There is Christ's view—only believe; man is called beyond facts, he is called into the sanctuary of God's secret. We often put the period where God Himself puts only a comma; we say "dead" when God Himself says "sleepeth." The incident may be treated as showing three things:—(1) Christ not sent for until the last moment. (2) Christ misunderstood when sent for. (3) Christ never sent for in vain.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 94.

REFERENCES: v. 35-43.—*Homilist*, new series, vol. iv., p. 64. v. 36.—W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. i., p. 269; T. Wallace, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 143; R. Thornton, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 77. v. 39-40.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 251. v. 41-42.—*New Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 37. v. 42.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 542. v. 43.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 8th series, p. 45.

Chap. vi., vers. 1-3.

I. CHRISTIAN doctrine applicable to all classes of men.

II. Christian doctrine calculated to excite the profoundest surprise.

III. Christian doctrine always conveying the impression of unique power.

IV. Christian doctrine showing the magnificence of the personality of its teachers.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 95.

REFERENCES: vi. 1-6.—Parker, *Christian Commonwealth*, vol. vii., p. 575; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 119.

Chap. vi., vers. 2, 3.—"From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands? Is not this the carpenter? . . . and they were offended at Him."

DOES Labour block the way.

I. "Is not this mighty worker and wise teacher a carpenter?" Well, and what then? Skill in handling the plane and driving the saw does not expel wisdom from the speech, love from the heart and beauty from the life. "Carpenter" though He be, "never man spake like this Man." It is undeniable, that the Nazareth artisan is the true King of the ages, and the rightful Lord of the souls of men.

II. The disaffected Nazarenes might have dispelled their passion-fed prejudice by simply recalling the leading names of their typical history. In the beginning God had set the stamp of His approval on human labour, and all along had chosen as the chief toilers for the higher and spiritual welfare of Israel and the world, those who were devoted to useful handicrafts or pastoral pursuits.

III. It would be unfair to treat this jaundiced jeer, this outburst of the lowest and rudest thought of Galilee, as though it expressed the prevalent Jewish idea of labour. Far from it. Handicrafts were specially honoured amongst the Jews, and the occupants of the highest posts of learning and tuition were most familiar with the lower forms of human toil.

IV. It is from the fullest life ever lived, a life unequalled in its sweet dignity and familiarity, tender strength and daring meekness, a life from which the moral grandeur never departs—it is from it we get the strongest witness that labour does not block the way to manhood. That life is set deep in the forests of human toil. So far as we know, Christ left the bench of the carpenter for the post of Teacher and Reformer. His work was His college. "He learnt obedience by the things which He suffered," and acquired fitness for His ministry of brief but

measureless energy, tender pathos, broad sympathies, and heroic self-sacrifice. The lowliest tasks well done are the best preparations for helpful ministries to the world.

V. Let us beware of the strong illusion which resides in the commonplace. Familiarity with Jesus as the son of Mary and brother of Joses, as playmate and fellow-workman, closed the eyes of the Nazarenes to the spiritual meaning of His life. This is the Carpenter indeed, but God is in Him to save the whole life of all men. Trust Him, love Him, and be like Him.

J. CLIFFORD, *The Dawn of Manhood*, p. 20.

REFERENCE: vi. 2, 3.—Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 314.

Chap. vi., ver. 3.

THE Holiness of Common Life.

I. The holiest of men may to all outward eyes appear exactly like other people. For in what does holiness consist but in a due fulfilment of the relative duties of our state in life, and in spiritual fellowship with God. Now the relative duties of life are universal. Every man has his own. That which makes one man to differ from another is not so much what things he does, as his manner of doing them. Two men, the most opposite in character, may dwell side by side, and do the very same daily acts, but in the sight of God be as far apart as light and darkness.

II. True holiness is not made up of extraordinary acts. For the greater part of men, the most favourable description of holiness will be found exactly to coincide with the ordinary path of duty, and it will be most surely promoted by repressing the wanderings of ambition, in which we frame to ourselves states of mind and habits of devotion remote from our actual lot, and by spending all our strength in those things, great or small, pleasing or unpalatable, which belong to our calling and position.

III. Any man, whatever be his outward circumstances of life, may reach to the highest point of devotion. In all ages the saints of the Church have been mingled in all the duties and toils of life, until age or the events of Providence set them free. There was nothing uncommon about most of them but their holiness. Their very lot in life ministered to them occasions of obedience and humiliation. They sought God fervently in the turmoil of homes and armies and camps and courts; and He revealed Himself to them in love, and became

the centre about which they moved, and the rest of all their affections. Let us whose lot is cast in these latter times, when the Church has once more become almost hidden in the world, be of the holy fellowship of Him who to the eyes of men was only the carpenter, but in the eyes of God was the very Christ. Let us look well to our daily duties. The least of them is a wholesome discipline of humiliation; if, indeed, anything can be little which may be done for God.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 220.

REFERENCES: vi. 3.—W. Dorling, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 232; J. Johnston, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 85; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 164.

Chap. vi., vers. 5, 6—"And He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And He marvelled because of their unbelief."

THE text contains two remarkable instances, in a short space, of the manner in which the feelings and circumstances of men are ascribed to God in the Scriptures. It is said of Him who is Almighty, that He could there do no mighty work; it is said of Him to whom all things were known, that He marvelled because of their unbelief. It is very easy to see that these expressions are mere figures of speech; that Christ did not want the power to do miracles at Nazareth, but that there were some strong reasons for His not doing them, that it was, therefore, impossible for Him to work any; that He did not really marvel at their unbelief, but that it was so strange and unreasonable, that anyone except Him, to whom all hearts are open, might fairly have wondered at it.

I. But it is not on this account that I have chosen for my text this passage of the Scriptures; it contains another and much more important lesson. When it says that Christ could do no mighty work in Nazareth because of the unbelief of the people, it shows us how our sins defeat the gracious purposes of God towards us; how we hinder Him, in a manner, from doing what He wishes for our good; how we make it impossible for Him to avoid punishing us, although He has no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn from his ways and live.

II. What is it that hinders us individually from finding in the Gospel all that we ought to find in it, or from experiencing in life a greater share of those comforts which God has promised to give to His people? What is become of the blessings which

Christ has promised upon our hearty prayers; or of His assurance that where two or three are gathered together in His name, there is He in the midst of them? What should become of them, when we come here in a spirit of unbelief, so that our prayers are anything but the prayers of faith? God cannot make His good things plain to us if our hearts are hardened; nor can He show forth in us the mighty works of His grace, if He finds in us nothing but a dull and evil heart of unbelief.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 75.

REFERENCE: vi. 5.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 7th series, p. 70.

THIS statement: I. refutes the notion that where there is a true ministry there will be great success.

II. Shows the tremendous difficulties which the human will can oppose to the purposes of God.

III. Justifies the true worker in leaving the sphere in which he has been unsuccessful, to carry on his work under more favourable circumstances. PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 95.

Chap. vi., ver. 6.—"He marvelled because of their unbelief."

I. LET us consider the nature of unbelief. What is it? The word, so translated, will be found twelve times in the New Testament, and always in one signification. In its fullest sense, of course, it only exists in lands where men enjoy the light of revelation. Where there is little known there can be little unbelief. It consists in not believing something or other that God has said, some warning that He gave, some promise that He held out, some advice that He offers, some judgment that He threatens, some message that He sends. In short, to refuse to admit the truth of God's revealed word, and to live as if we did not think that Word was to be depended on, is the essence of unbelief.

II. Let us now inquire why and wherefore unbelief is so wonderful. What is there in it that made even the Lord Jesus the Son of God marvel? (1) For one thing unbelief is a spiritual disease peculiar to Adam's children, it is a habit of soul entirely confined to man. Angels in heaven above, and fallen spirits in hell beneath, saints waiting for the resurrection in Paradise, lost sinners waiting for the last judgment in that awful place where the worm never dies, and the fire is not quenched, all these have one point, in common, they all believe. Surely a habit of soul, so absolutely, entirely confined to living man, may well be called marvellous. (2) For another thing unbelief is marvellous when you consider its arrogance and

presumption. For, after all, how little the wisest of men know, and none are more ready to confess it than themselves. How enormously ignorant the greater part of mankind are if you come to examine the measure of their knowledge. When a man says he is troubled with sceptical and unbelieving feelings about Christianity, while he has probably never studied a dozen pages of Paley, or Butler, or Chalmers, or Bishop Nelson, and never thought deeply about religion at all, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that one of the most curious things in much unbelief is its wonderful self-conceit. (3) For another thing unbelief is marvellous when you consider its unfairness and one-sidedness. Who has not known that some of the minor facts and miracles of the Bible are the ostensible reasons which many assign why they cannot receive the book as true, and make it their rule of faith and practice. And all this time they refuse to look at three great facts:—the historical person Jesus Christ, the Bible itself, and the amazing change which has taken place in the state of the world before Christianity and since Christianity. (4) Unbelief is marvellous when you consider how the vast majority of those who profess it, drop it, and give it up at last. Few of us, perhaps, have the least idea how seldom any man leaves the world an unbeliever. If those who profess to deny revelation generally died happy deaths, and left the world in great peace and joy, holding their opinions to the last, we might well expect them to have followers. But when, on the contrary, it is the rarest thing to see an unbeliever dying calmly in unbelief, and giving no sign of discomfort, while the vast majority of unbelievers throw down their arms at last, and seek for the very religious consolation which they once affected to despise, it is impossible to avoid one broad conclusion. That conclusion is, that of all spiritual diseases by which fallen man is affected, there is none so truly marvellous and unreasonable as unbelief.

BISHOP RYLE, *Oxford Undergraduates' Journal*, May 27th, 1880.

REFERENCES: **vi. 6.**—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 935; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 262; Bishop Ryle, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 36; G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 142; *Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 199. vi. 7-13.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 253; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 129; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 99. vi. 7-30.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 205. vi. 12.—Todd, *Lectures to Children*, p. 9. vi. 14.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 41. vi. 14-16.—W. Walters, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 42. vi. 14-29.—R. S. Candlish, *Scripture Characters and Miscellanies*, p. 137; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*,

p. 129; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 72. vi. 16.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 358; *Homiletic Quarterly* vol. i., p. 534. vi. 17.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 235. vi. 17, 18.—*Ibid.*, p. 49.

Chap. vi., ver. 20.—"For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."

THE Peril of playing with Spiritual Convictions.

I. There is no greater peril than that of amusing ourselves with God's truth, taking pleasure in hearing it, in joining in discussions about religion and objects connected therewith, yet not making it the rule of action, or really doing anything to promote those objects. The story of Herod which the text brings before us contains a remarkable instance of this. We can quite imagine with what emotions of alarm the lewd king may have heard the tale of the wild unearthly man, with his proclamation of a heavenly kingdom at hand, to whom the whole nation flocked. His own looseness of morals and living would predispose him to be struck by the severe, self-mortified life, which the Baptist led. His own violation of Divine and human law stood rebuked by the presence of that man, holy and just. The impure Herod saw in John one whom the shadows of eternity appeared visibly to encircle. To hear of him was as it were to enter into the cloud, and as he entered, he feared.

II. "He did many things." Ah! it is just at this point that the whole history becomes so intensely practical. What those many things were which Herod amended at the bidding of John we vainly surmise. A few of the grosser corruptions of his foul course were perchance removed, or it may be John could hold back the stubborn king in some one occasional act of cruelty, or persuade him to pay some outward attention to the outward worship of God; but he could not, did not turn him to a thorough reformation of his own life. The only voice which had ever stirred the better spirit within him was quenched in blood, and the last state became worse than the first.

III. From Herod's history we learn (1) how it may happen that a man who has manifested a certain interest in and deference to religion will yet turn against religion when it assails his cherished idol. (2) How religious instruction, when not honestly followed out, becomes itself a snare.

J. R. WOODFORD, *Sermons on Subjects from the New Testament*, p. 26.

REFERENCES: vi. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 347

vol. xxvi., No. 1,548; *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vii., p. 136; A. Barry, *Cheltenham College Sermons*, p. 229. vi. 21—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 148. vi. 22.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vii., p. 133. vi. 25.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 25; *Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 143.

Chap. vi., ver. 26.—"And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her."

Let us briefly examine the plea set up by Herod in the case before us. It was twofold.

I. The first was for his oath's sake. In a moment of hasty excitement he had rashly promised on oath to give the girl whatever she would ask; and therefore he fancied himself bound to do as he had solemnly sworn. Now this would have been a valid plea if he had had any right to make such an oath, or if the thing required of him had been in itself indifferent. But as the case stands, he is only giving one sin as a reason for the commission of another. There is nothing in morals that can be plainer than this: that where there is an obligation of a higher and of a lower kind seeking to oppose each other, the lower must invariably yield to the higher, and not the higher to the lower one. No oath, however solemnly sworn, can bind a man to commit sin.

II. But if this plea will not stand, still less will the other that is alleged, and "for their sakes that were with him." Who was to blame for their being there, and who were they that they should give laws to him, and absolve him from the higher law of God? Morality is not a fluctuating thing, a thing to be regulated like the climate, by the latitude of the place, or to vary with the character of the different companies into which we may chance to be thrown. It is the will of God, and like God, it is unchangeable and eternal. Truth is truth and a lie is a lie, no matter who is within hearing; holiness is holiness, and sin is sin, no matter who beholds it; and the companions by whom we surround ourselves, however much they may change our feelings in the commission of sin, cannot change the nature of the sin itself. We will venture to say that, if the monarch had only declared that it was impossible to grant such a request, there was enough of reverence for God's law and human right in each of their breasts as at once to approve the deed, and Herod would have stood forth before them all a greater man than they had yet imagined him to be. In conclusion, note a few lessons from this interesting subject. (1)

Beware of the beginning of sin. It was this which so fettered Herod here, and gave such power to his plea of necessity for committing gross sin. (2) Beware of the companions with whom you connect yourselves. Say *No.* Learn to say it with emphasis, and soon you will rise so high in the esteem, even of sinners, that they will cease to torment you, and leave you to take the course your Saviour has marked out for you. (3) Above all, seek to have a saving interest in Jesus Christ, and the constant indwelling of His Spirit in your hearts.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Life Truths*, p. 163.

REFERENCES: vi. 26.—R. S. Candlish, *Scripture Characters and Miscellanies*, pp. 156, 177.—R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 218. vi. 26, 27.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 10th series, p. 53.

Chap. vi., ver. 30.—"**And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.**"

TALKING it over with Christ.

They had been for some time separated from Christ. It was necessary in order to their becoming healthy and stalwart Christ's men, that they should not continue for ever at Christ's side, but that with something of Him, something of His principles, His Spirit, His wisdom and grace, sown and sunk in them, they should begin to exercise at a distance from Him, clear of the support of His mighty personality.

I. But the Apostles have now returned from the excursion, and are found gathering "together to Him, to tell Him all things, both what they have done and what they have taught." And how beautiful the readiness, the bold unshrinking readiness, they show to rehearse their proceedings at His feet, and to go over the whole story with Him. How suggestive of the patience, the tenderness, the thoughtful forbearance and sympathy, with which he had habitually treated them, and in reliance on which they had learned to be frank and free in exposing themselves before Him—had learned not to be afraid to tell Him everything.

II. A review of our activities—especially when we have been engaged in any earnest serious work, and even at the close of any period of occupation and effort—a review of our activities is always desirable, and often of great importance and value. It reveals points, sometimes of much interest and moment, in connection with them which otherwise would never be observed. We miss the divinely intended lessons and admonitions of our

activities unless we review them. They throw off continually indications, revelations of ourselves, which we must look back to see.

III. The Apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus. They brought their activities into the light of His presence; and was not that the very best thing they could do, if they wanted to estimate them rightly and to understand and profit by their teaching? Happy is he whose custom and whose comfort it is to go in to the Lord from time to time, for the purpose of showing Him all things, and reviewing and pondering His life before Him. Let us seek to do this. We shall find the rich help and benefit of it; and our sufficient strength for it will be found in the remembrance that He to whom we are to speak freely is our *Father*.

S. A. TIPPLE, *Echoes of Spoken Words*, p. 43.

Chap. vi., vers. 30, 31.

DEVOTION possible in the Busiest Life.

We may learn from our Lord's life of toil, that there is nothing in a life of perpetual labour to hinder our attaining to the highest measure of perfection. There was never any one whose life was fuller of endless employments, or more broken by countless interruptions than His. This may show us that the most laborious may be the holiest of saints. There are, however, two objections which may be made against this example. One is that He, being sinless, must needs be independent of the means and conditions on which holiness depends in us, and therefore could suffer no obstruction by the multitude of His employments. The other is, that His work was not secular but sacred. One answer will suffice for both these objections.

I. It is true that He, being sinless, must necessarily be beyond the power of the worldly hindrances which obstruct a life of devotion to us. But is there not something really unsound in the idea that anything which is our duty in life can be an obstruction to any other duty? Surely the truth must be, that whatsoever in our daily life is lawful and right for us to be engaged in, is itself a part of our obedience to God; a part, that is, of our very religion! A life of devotion does not mean a life of separation from active duties, but the discharge of all offices, high or low, from the most sacred and elevated to the most secular and menial, in a devout spirit.

II. But we may go farther, and say not only that the duties

of life, be they never so toilsome and distracting, are no obstructions to a life of any degree of inward holiness, but that they are even direct means, when rightly used, to promote our sanctification. The weariness, crosses, disappointments, vexations, which arise in our daily tasks; the early hours and late; the crowding and thronging of the multitude—all these are but as the dust, ashes, and sackcloth of our just humiliation.

III. Another benefit in continual employment is, that it acts as a great check upon the temptations which beset an unoccupied and disengaged man. Next to prayer and a life of devotional habits there is nothing that keeps the heart so pure, and the will so strong and steadfast, as a life of continual duty.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 305.

REFERENCES: vi. 30 32.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 107; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 214. vi. 30-34.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 134. vi. 30-37.—J. W. Burn, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 36.

Chap. vi., vers. 30-42.

THE Marvellous Meal.

I. The disciples had been away from Jesus, on their first missionary tour, journeying on foot from town to town, preaching what He had taught them, and working miracles with the power which He had bestowed. When they returned, they had much to tell and to ask; and the Lord, seeing them in need of quiet and rest, said to them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." Jesus must have needed rest as much as they did, for we are told "there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." But it was not of Himself he thought, but of His disciples. Do you wish to be a real disciple of the Lord Jesus—really like Him? Then there is nothing you must more earnestly seek than this,—to be unselfish. We cannot overcome selfishness in our own strength, but we may in His of whom it is written, "Even Christ pleased not Himself."

II. The hot noon has passed; the afternoon is wearing away; and the mountain shadows point towards us across the lake. Many of the people are sitting or lying on the grass, faint with hunger and fatigue. The disciples at last come to their Master and ask if He will not send the people away, that they may go into the villages and buy food, before the sun sets and night

comes on. To their amazement, Jesus answers, "They need not depart; give ye them to eat." The Lord bade them see what they could find. They brought word that there was a lad who had in his basket five cakes of barley bread and two small salted fish. "Bring them (said Jesus) hither to Me." I wonder whether the lad objected to give up his basket, and whether the disciples paid him for it, or whether he gladly gave it as soon as he knew that the Lord asked it. If so, what an honour and happiness for him to supply the provision out of which the Lord fed all that multitude. He was repaid, as money could not have paid him. Doubtless, the Lord Jesus took care he should be no loser by yielding up his little store.

III. "They did all eat and were filled." It was a very plain meal, only barley-cake and salt fish, with a draught of clear water from some cool mountain brook. Yet for the poorest and most friendless among the five thousand on the hillside—healed by the touch, taught by the lips, fed by the hand of Jesus, it would have been a poor exchange to have changed places with king Herod in his palace, or with the great emperor of Rome, Tiberius Cæsar himself.

E. R. CONDER, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 224.

Chap. vi. ver. 31.—"And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat."

CHRISTIAN Work and Christian Rest.

I. With all our Lord's constant activity in doing good, let us hear the words of this text, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while." We know from other places in the Gospels, of what rest our Lord was here speaking, and how He employed these hours of retirement and solitude. No doubt, partaking as He did of the bodily infirmities of our nature, He required rest literally and in the simplest sense of the word; and no doubt also that such periods of rest and entire refreshment are not only allowable, but useful and even necessary. Let Christ show us how we may refresh our bodies and minds without letting our souls suffer; how we may return from such retirement, strengthened alike in body and in mind, for the work that is set before us. These times, which our Lord passed in a desert place, generally among the mountains that rise at some little distance from the shores of the Sea of Galilee, were His favourite times of prayer and meditation. He who as God worked and does work for ever, yet as a man and for our example

thought it right to vary His active labours with intervals of religious rest.

II. Here, then, in three parts of the text—in the zeal with which our Lord pursued His work, in the particular nature of it, and in the rest with which He thought fit from time to time to vary it—there is matter of special improvement for three classes of persons. The zeal with which He pursued His work, so that they had no leisure so much as to eat, is an example for that most numerous class who are merely following their pleasure, or who, if obliged to work, yet work unwillingly and grudgingly. The particular nature of Christ's work is an example and a warning for those who, like the ground choked with thorns, are working indeed, and working zealously, but whose work is never of the same sort as Christ's: it is worldly in its beginning and worldly also in its end. And in the rest which Christ took from time to time, and the uses which He made of it, even they who are actually labouring in His service may learn how alone their labour may be blessed to themselves as well as to others; how their work may indeed be such as that when they fail in this world they may be received into the everlasting habitations of God.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 150.

WE learn from the text a lesson of zeal in the discharge of our daily duties. "For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat."

I. There are some dispositions which, from absolute indolence, seem to be zealous about nothing whatever—persons who appear neither to care about business or pleasure, who cannot be roused to take an active interest in anything. These are characters which exist, and which we must all have sometimes met with; but they are not common, neither are they very dangerous, because the general feeling of men is apt to despise them as stupid and insensible. A much more common case is that of persons who like some things exceedingly and are all alive whenever they happen to be engaged in them; but who do not like their common employment, and display about that no interest at all. This is a very common case, for it rarely happens that our employment is the very one which we should most choose, or the one which we most choose at this particular time, or under these particular circumstances.

II. True it is that we cannot do heartily what we dislike; but it is no less true that we may learn if we will to like many

things which we at present dislike; and the real guilt of idleness consists in its refusal to go through this discipline. I might speak of the well known force of habit in reconciling us to what is most unwelcome to us; that, by mere perseverance, what was at first very hard becomes first a little less so, then much less so, and at last so easy that, according to a well known law of our faculties, it becomes a pleasure to us to do it. But although perseverance will certainly do this, what is to make us so persevering? If we go through the discipline it will cure us, but what can engage us to give it a fair trial? And here it is that I would bring in the power of Christ's example; here it is that the grace of God, through Christ, will give us the victory. The Son of God pleased not Himself, and who are we who do not deny ourselves? His creatures, who owe everything to His goodness, and yet day by day are unworthy of it: His creatures, who, offending Him every hour, are yet impatient of anything but pleasure at His hands; who, with so much of that guilt for which He was pleased to be crucified, are yet unwilling to submit to that discipline which His pure and spotless soul endured cheerfully for no need of His own, but for our sakes.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 157.

THE Religious Life.

I. The life of Christ was a busy life. The great work of redemption was so pre-eminently the work of Christ's life, that we sometimes lose sight of the enormous and ceaseless work which He accomplished daily in teaching, in healing disease, in travelling from place to place, so that, on some occasions, "He had no time so much as to eat," and was so fatigued at night that amidst a storm He slept soundly in a boat on the Galilean Sea. Thus the life of Christ was a life of earnest and active work. We can well imagine how the spotless holiness of Jesus of Nazareth consecrated every labour and hallowed every social scene. To many this will seem a complete type of the religious life. "Do your work honestly," say they; "enter into the pleasures of life soberly, and there is no need for any special reverence or any extraordinary means of spiritual culture."

II. But if we read our Master's life carefully we see that there is another side to it. There were periods when He felt that He needed rest, retirement, struggle, prayer. Again and again He goes apart a while to the stillness of the garden, or to the solemn loneliness of the mountain-side. He would retire at intervals

from the wear and tear and weariness of public life, and in meditation, and solitude, and prayer, would strengthen His spiritual nature—would deepen that hunger and thirst in His Divine soul for which the meat and drink were the doing of His Father's will.

III. Our great duty at present is life. It is to live that God gives us energy of mind and body. Every one of us who knows even a little of the internal side of this great mass of human life, amid which our lot is cast, must feel deeply convinced that if all true and honest men, and all true and pure women, were to withdraw themselves from the world, it would be the taking away of the very salt which is preserving it from decay. While we thus go into life, however, let us remember how hard is the battle, how wearing and exhausting to our better nature are the passions and strifes amid which we have to move. Let us remember how this tends to weaken our spiritual strength, to enervate our spiritual life. We need seasons when the Master calls us, as His disciples, to come apart with Him and rest a while.

T. T. SHORE, *The Life of the World to Come*, p. 52.

AFTER Rest.

I. The great horror, which followed upon so base a crime as the murder of John Baptist, might have seemed, perhaps, to us to suggest that his death was the very moment for our Lord and His disciples to step out, to denounce at once the tyrant himself, and the sin and luxury of the upper classes; and, with the blood of the martyr before them, to commence a new cycle of preaching with a new prospect of success. But not so our Lord thought. From what He said and did, which was so very different, even we, in such different times, and in such quiet walks of life as ours, may perhaps learn some lesson for to-day. He received the news, and His only utterance seems to have been: "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while." The teaching of nature, God's voice in the beauty of the wilderness—that seems to have been their healing and their strength.

II. The bidding would, while all obeyed it, awake different echoes in different hearts; some, perhaps, would understand it as He meant it, some would be only too willing to hide their sadness and their despair of anything good coming out of a land where the regenerators of society were marked for early doom, some in the sense of strength unused and courage unbroken would

think (except that they trusted Him) that they were losing time. Had He not seriously said to them that they must work while it is called day because of the approach of that night in which no work can be done?

III. It is with feelings various as these that we look often on the rest of Death: some seem to reach such fulness of wisdom and sagacity, the rashness of youth gone and yet its courage left, the inexperience to which all seemed easy succeeded by the experience which has learnt that difficulties abound almost impregnable unless approached by the one access to their citadel. They see the moment come for some decisive step, and who so fit as they to take it? And even then, in the wisdom of God, though to our baffling, is the moment when such men are taken from the world. Who can conceive why that is the very hour when God says to them: "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while?" We cannot realise the secret and the mystery of that place whither they go; but they find there Christ and the Apostles still, resting a while until the day of their recompensing work arrive.

ARCHBISHOP BENSON, *Boy Life: Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 156.

THE Saviour counsels retirement. He addresses the privileged Twelve; and recommends, proposes, will Himself lead and accompany, a withdrawal, a retreat, a seclusion from scenes and engagements and enjoyments too, which were in their own nature harmless, full of advantage to the persons busied in them, and to thousands and tens of thousands beside and beyond themselves. Jesus said to His disciples: "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while." When we compare St. Mark's with St. Matthew's narrative of this retirement we shall find three reasons for it.

I. St. Matthew expressly connects it with the tidings of the Baptist's martyrdom. John's disciples buried the corpse, and went and told Jesus. And "when Jesus heard of it, He departed thence by ship into a desert place apart." Read in this the Saviour's warrant for our mourning in the loss of friends. A near kinsman has been cut off by a sudden, a violent death. Was not Christ one with us in feeling it? Was He not here reproving by His example that stoical or that hyper-spiritual view of bereavement which would forbid the tear to flow, or the heart to ache, because it is God's will, or because death is the gate of life.

II. St. Mark gives us a second reason for the retirement

counselled in the text. He connects it with the return of the Apostles from a mission described in earlier verses of the chapter. Christ receives them with an invitation to solitude, as though He saw that the excitement of a special service needed its counteraction; that there was something in them of a spiritual elation akin to self-complacency, if not to self-glorying—requiring, therefore, that discipline not always for the present joyous, of a wilderness sojourn, literal or figurative, by which the soul recovers its juster, healthier estimate of greatness and littleness, of itself and God.

III. There is yet one third reason for this retirement, and St. Mark suggests it in the clause following the text: "For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." The mere unrest of that busy life created the necessity of retirement. The mere business of a life is reason enough for its resting. The mere coming and going of many who want and seek and would employ this life, is enough in the mind of the holy and compassionate Lord to demand intervals of repose and recreation. How much more when there is taken also into the reckoning what an over-tasked and over-taxed life of necessity must be, in reference to the higher interests—to the well being of the soul.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Words of Hope*, p. 247.

I. THE Apostles' mission was ended. Such special efforts must begin and end. Neither for the worker's sake, nor for the sake of those worked upon, is it expedient that they should be other than temporary. The kind Saviour saw that the whole mission had been a heavy pull on their energies, both of body and mind. He saw that they were wrought up to a pitch of excitement; He saw they needed rest after toil, and quiet after excitement; He knew where they would get these—not by sitting still and doing nothing for a space amid the throng of men coming and going—not there: they must get apart to the calm seclusion of nature, where green hills and green trees and rippling streams should speak to their heart. Much grass—humblest, commonest, most beautiful of all vegetation—would pour its gentle refreshment into weary eye and aching brain. And so our blessed Redeemer's words are to the outworn, wrought-up Apostles: "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while."

II. Far more needful now has the counsel grown which is set forth in my text. Never, in the history of this country, have

there been days in which the work of cultured men was so hard, so eager, so exhausting, so perilous, to fagged brain and nerves, to fevered soul and spirit. If Christ were here as of old He would say such words as those of my text. "Come away from this crowd of human beings, come away from this over-pressure and hurry of engagements; come away to a desert place, to the silent hills, to the lonely shore; come and rest a while: you need quiet that you may see your way.

III. One wonders how our Redeemer and His Apostles would rest. Probably as other wearied men would. At first pure idleness. To the worn-out that is absolute rest. For a while it would be delightful just to do nothing. But after a little time that will not do. Let every weary mortal, entering on his resting-time, provide some occupation for it. And finally, if you would enjoy rest, if you would come back with a soul set right; wiser, calmer, more hopeful, more charitable; to do your work better and more cheerfully, to bear with less irritation the provocations which all earnest people will know—all who desire to mend things and folk around them, see to it that you make the resting-time a time of distinct religious discipline.

A. K. H. B., *Graver Thoughts of a Country Parson*, 3rd series, p. 1.

Seclusions with Christ.

The world is too much with us. For some purposes it cannot be too much with us. With it, and in it, lies our work. To encourage the activities, to direct the energies, to foster the interests, of a little fragment of our generation—this is one of the highest works given to any man; to go out of the world would be to desert the post assigned, and to do despite to the wisdom which has assigned it. And yet the world may be too much with us.

I. There are some influences of the world which need a strong counteraction. One of these is *irritation*; it is scarcely possible for a man to go through a long day of business without some trial of temper. (2) Another evil influence is *worldliness*.

II. Out of these plain and everyday experiences of all springs, as of course, the qualifying and correcting necessity—"Come ye yourselves into a desert place, and rest a while." This seclusion may be either periodical or occasional. (1) By a wise and merciful ordinance of God's providence, all of us are taken aside, as it were, from the multitude in almost one-half of our earthly being. I speak not now of the ordinances of religion, but of

appointments of nature. Think what night is, and then say what we should be without it. Think of its compulsory withdrawal from the exciting contests, the angry recriminations, the fallacious ambitions, the frivolous vanities, which belong to a day and to a multitude! Think of its natural tendency to recall the thought of dependence and of creatureship; to remind us of Him with whom darkness and light are alike, and who Himself neither slumbereth nor sleepeth. Where should we be, the best of us, if nature did not thus play unto the hands of grace?

III. And so we pass from the periodical to the occasional. God's grace has many sinkings; It despises no method as insignificant, it overlooks, we believe, no person as beneath its notice. Upon one Christ tries His hand of healing thus, and upon another thus—adapting Himself with nicest discrimination to the antecedents, to the circumstances, to the character and to the life. But one thing you will always find—He begins by taking him aside from the multitude, saying, "Come apart for a while with Me." Nothing can be done without that. Go aside with Christ now, and then there shall be no surprise, and no confusion, and no misgiving, if, when He comes for us, He even come suddenly, calling us to arise and follow Him through the pangs of a most suffering or a most startling death.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Last Words at Doncaster*, p. 259.

THE Christian Uses of Leisure.

I. One element of rest to be cultivated in leisure is communion with outward nature.

II. Another is intercourse with fellow-Christians.

III. A third is a closer converse with Christ Himself.

J. KER, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 146.

REFERENCES: vi. 31.—S. Leathes, *Truth and Life*, p. 134; J. F. Kitto, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 129; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 243; E. W. Shalders, *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 105; A. Rowland, *Ibid.*, vol. xxix, p. 332; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 255. vi. 31-4.—*Ibid.*, vol. iii., p. 291. vi. 33-44.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 120.

Chap. vi., ver. 34.—"Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and He began to teach them many things."

I. THE spirit and object of our Lord's teaching are given in the words of my text. His teaching is the teaching of a merciful

Saviour, and its spirit is compassion and tenderness. "When He saw the people, He was moved with compassion toward them." And its object is to save that which was lost; because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; therefore He was moved with compassion toward them, and began to teach them many things. It is not to make the wise wiser, or the good better, but to save those that were lost, to call the sinner to repentance. "The whole," said He, "need not a physician." By which and other such words, our Lord meant to show, that in order to take this teaching rightly, we must know ourselves to be such as we really are, and such as His teaching supposes us to be. That is, in coming to Him, we must not fancy that we have a knowledge and a goodness, imperfect indeed, but yet of some value, and requiring only to be improved and strengthened. We must come to Him as being sheep without a shepherd, sheep gone astray; as sick men needing a physician—these are His own figures; or, without a figure, we must come to Him as having no knowledge as to the great matter of saving our souls; as having no goodness that can abide God's judgment.

II. Consider what it is to be looked on by Christ, our most merciful Saviour, with compassion. There is an evil about us, then, which we dream not of; a danger which we do not at all suspect. If Christ looks on us with compassion, ought we not to be afraid? Again, Christ looks on us with pity; we have been very ungrateful to Him; very unheeding; He has called, but we would not answer, yet still His look is one of pity. It might well be a look of anger, of judgment, but it is a look of compassion. That is, He still cares for us, He would that we should not perish, He would still be our Saviour. Let any one consider what it is to be so regarded by his Saviour, and then can he help turning to Him? When we turn He is ready to teach us many things; even the whole counsel of God.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 178.

REFERENCES: vi. 34.—C. Kingsley, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 219. vi. 35-44.—E. R Conder, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 224. vi. 38.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 144.

Chap. vi., ver. 39.

NOTE:—

I. The need which comes to men of simply being fed by God, of ceasing from forth-puttingness and self-assertion, and simply being receptive to the influences which come to them from Divinity.

II. Two lessons come to us out of the scene. (1) Seek your

life's nourishment in your life's work. (2) Make your most restful contemplation and your most receptive listening at the feet of God, not to be mere spiritual luxuries, but to be forms and modes of action.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 122.

Chap. vi., vers. 45-51.

The Disciples in the Storm.

The whole of this narrative is historical; all literally took place eighteen centuries ago; but at the same time this page of the Gospel is like a sublime parable whose minutest features comprise a teaching for all ages, and which is wonderfully adapted to sustain the faith of believers to-day.

I. What is it which so often troubles our faith in the Divine promises? It is the fact that God does not direct events and things for the triumph of His cause, and that that cause seems often to be vanquished by fatality. This is a contradiction which confounds us. God wants truth to prevail; He commands His Church to announce it to the world; His design is here express and manifest; and when, to serve Him, His Church puts itself to the work, God permits circumstances to array themselves against it and hinder it. We forget that Christ overcame the world only by raising against Him all its resistance; that the Cross has been a sign of triumph only because it has been an instrument of punishment, and that in its apparent impotence and ignominy we must at all times seek the secret of its power and of its invincible attraction.

II. History is like a night stretching across the ages; in all times believers are called to wait for God's intervention, but God delays to come, and that is the supreme trial of faith —greater, perhaps, than the opposition of men and even of persecution. Often Christ appears to humanity as a phantom. That pure and holy image has often awoke in those who beheld Him for the first time, only mistrust, hostility, mockery, and more than one generation has hailed Him with a repellent cry.

III. But in the midst of the gloom which envelops the disciples a voice is heard. Jesus Christ has spoken. He has said, "It is I; be not afraid." The Apostles recognise that voice; in the midst of the storm their hearts are penetrated with a Divine peace. It is the same at all seasons. There is an incomparable emphasis in Christ's sayings. Yesterday we were in trouble and anguish, to-day we hear and are subdued. Explain who can this phenomenon. It is a fact for which witnesses would

rise to-day in all parts of the world. Everywhere and in every age there are men who are enlightened, soothed, consoled, by this voice, and to whom it gives an invincible conviction, an immortal hope.

E. BERSIER, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 48.

REFERENCES: vi. 45-52.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 128; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 140. vi. 47, 48.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 83.

Chap. vi., ver. 48.—"And He saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them."

MYSTERIOUS Passages of Life.

I. The mysterious passages of life are as truly meant for us as when on that melancholy night Jesus decidedly and deliberately left His disciples till "the fourth watch," till the very verge of daybreak, to labour alone with the rough waves, and to weary themselves in rowing in that stormy sea; while a Divine love seemed as if it took advantage of that cruel hour—for the more they strove the more helpless they grew. I do not say that this is life; but I say that every life, at all times, is hard work, and I say that every life has those special passages. They may be, and they are, in their intensity, a parenthesis, but still they are; and while they last they seem very long. It is then that we forget the smooth waters, and the favouring gale, and the sunny wave, and the happy converse, and the ever-lessening distance; and we see nothing but the swellings of our difficulties, and the dying-out of the specks of our ever-departing hope.

II. It is no little thing to have an object steadily in view, to know that that object is right, to labour for it intently, to sigh for it deeply, to pray for it wrestlingly; and yet, despite all the efforts, and all the sighs, and all the prayers, never to near it, but to see it going farther and farther away into the distance from us. And if that object be some high and holy thing, which seems not only for our spiritual good, a very necessity for our souls, but for God's own glory, yet to toil and toil and weary ourselves upon labours that are nothing worth, is an exercise of faith that becomes extreme. The word of comfort is this, Jesus sees you. Darkness and distance shut out Him from you; but they never shut out you from Him. To be in His eye is life and safety. To please that eye is the one pure joy of human existence.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 187.

THE Contrary Currents of Life.

The winds always seem contrary to those who have any high and earnest purpose in life. The stirring of a high and godly purpose is like swinging round with the head to the current. Thenceforth every moment must be an effort, every thought a prayer; or the stream will be sweeping you farther and farther from the longed-for shore.

I. We are able when thinking over this great matter, a life-course and its issues, to remind ourselves of the great life-course to which the winds were ever contrary, which something seemed always to sweep back from its end. Without question, life is a hard matter to the earnest, the night is dark, and the toil hard. Often the main support of faith is to look steadily to Him to whom the night was darker, the toil harder, and Who is seated now a radiant Conqueror at the right hand of the throne of God.

II. Let us look at the broad fact of the contrariness of the currents of life. With some there is a life-long struggle to fulfil the duty of some uncongenial calling, which yields no fair field of activity to the powers which they are conscious of stirring within. They never, in fact, can get fairly entered for the race in which they might have no small chance of winning the prize. There are others who are crossed in their dearest hope; life is one long, sad regret. There are others with a weak and crippled body enshrining a spirit of noblest faculty; with intense ardour pent up within. And most of us find that something is always rising up to cross us; life is never long without some menace or check.

III. Consider the reason and the rightness of this contrariness of the currents of life. It *is* to keep us always under strain. God sets things against us to teach us to set ourselves against things, that we may master them, and remain their masters for evermore.

IV. The Master is watching how the lesson prospers. Not from on high; not from a safe shore; but there in the midst of the storm He is watching, nay is walking, drawing nigh, in the very crisis of the danger and the strain. The Master, who holds all things in His hand, shares through the night the toil and strain of His pilgrims, and He rules all for their salvation and the world's.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 353.

IN this text we have:—

I. An interesting illustration of the effect of rapid transitions

in outward circumstances upon internal religious experience. That day had been a great day to those disciples. In the morning they had returned from their extensive preaching tour, and begun to tell Jesus of their extraordinary success. The enthusiasm was overwhelming and intense, and the fervour of their souls must have kindled to the highest reach. As they joined in with Jesus in the exhausting labours His zeal led Him to undertake, they were quickened to exertions which really wore out their strength in the delight which they awakened. Out here on the chill water the disciples had no cheering alleviation of their work whatsoever; comfortless, wet to the skin with spray, cut to the bone by the raw spring wind, can we wonder that they speedily became fatigued, disgusted, petulant?

II. We see here the close and somewhat humiliating connection between wistful souls and weary bodies which always has to be recognised. Those skilled fishermen evidently had a hard time of it. They needed to put forth the most violent and persistent efforts in order to keep the small boat from being dashed to pieces before the hurricane. And, of course, they became positively tired out, and their faith had something like a melancholy failure.

III. We see that mere frames of desolate feeling give by no means a release from the pressure of diligent duty. That these disciples were impatient, or even unbelieving, offers us no reason to suppose they were so foolish as to imagine they might lay their oars in the bottom of the boat and let everything drift. Their duty and their need was to continue to do for themselves precisely what they knew Christ would wish, and what they remembered He had commanded.

IV. Jesus Christ, even in darkness, knows who has need of Him. "He saw them toiling," so we read, and then we reflect how little reason these men had for being melancholy. Glancing again back over the waves, we see Jesus on His knees for a while, praying, no doubt, for them as well as for others, and anon rising up to begin the peerless walk upon the waters which has made that night historic for the ages. Our vicissitudes toss only ourselves, and overturn only our pride, and that not perilously. Jesus' care remains steady.

V. We see that Jeaus Christ sometimes delays His coming to believers till He is sure of a welcome. "He would have passed by them," so we read again, What can this mean? When walking on the waves He did arrive at the boat-side, did

He propose tc give those forlorn men the go-by? No; He did it only to call into exercise the longing love which He knew they felt for Him, and so to get their earnest invitation to come into the vessel.

C. S. Robinson, *Sermons on Neglected Texts*, p. 152.

References: vi. 48.—W. M. Statham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 193; W. H. Jellie, *Ibid.*, vol. vii., p. 216; *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 193; *Homilist*, new series, vol. v., p. 154. vi. 52. —Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1,218.

Chap. vi., ver. 56.—"As many as touched Him were made whole."

Christ's Healing Virtue.

I. The Healed. Those here noticed were evidently affected with a variety of diseases of body and mind. From the circumstances, indeed, that all the affected of the surrounding region were assembled around the Redeemer, we may justly imagine that in some the sight was quenched, that in some the hearing was destroyed, that in some the whole frame was enfeebled, and that in some the mind was laid altogether prostrate. But whatever was the variety and inveteracy of their diseases, we are assured that they were made whole. As the material frame of those who were brought to touch even the hem of the Redeemer's garment was restored to a state of the most perfect soundness, so the moral nature of those who experience spiritual renovation is healed and fitted for immortal life.

II. The Source, or Fountain, of Healing. The cure, whether it was the restoration of sight or of hearing, or active power, or the casting out of devils, was effected simply by the silent but resistless virture which passed from the Redeemer when His person or even the hem of His garment was touched. In this we have a most expressive and beautiful emblem or representation of the great fountain of moral healing essential for the diseased and sin-stricken nature of man. Spiritual soundness and strength, moral freedom and blessedness, are to be derived simply and exclusively from Him who is become the great Physician of souls, the sole Fountain of internal purity and health.

III. The Medium through which the Healing Influence was transmitted. The cures which were effected on the sons and daughters of affliction gathered around the Redeemer were secured in the employment of such means as He sanctioned and approved. It was not the idle gaze of apathy and vulgar

astonishment, that looked wonderingly around when the sound of the Redeemer's fame was heard, or when His approach was announced, without any attempt to touch Him that was blessed with the healing virtue shed around His steps. No; it was the struggle to come near Him—it was the touch of His person, or the hem of His robe, prompted and sustained by the conviction that He was mighty to save, that met with the benediction, "Go in peace, thy faith hath made thee whole."

Preacher's Lantern, vol. iv., p. 625.

REFERENCES: vi. 56.—J. Menzies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 374; H. N. Grimley, *The Temple of Humanity*, p. 175; J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 348. vi.-viii.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. viii., p. 148. vii. 1-8; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 145. vii. 1-23.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 79. vii. 1-30.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 229. vii. 3.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. viii., p. 467. vii. 9-23.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Mam*, p. 151. vii. 19.—*Ibid.*, vol. iii., p. 308. vii. 20-23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1,911. vii. 21.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 225.

Chap. vii., ver. 24.—"But He could not be hid."

I. THE Lord Jesus is not hid. The Old Testament contained one promise which like a thread of gold ran through the whole; a promise that was oft repeated, which was embraced by all believers, the blessings of which were grandly unfolded as time rolled on; and which, in the fulness of time was accomplished. It was the Messiah. The Dayspring from on high has visited us. The Sun of Righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings, and therefore the Lord Jesus is not hid. He is plainly seen by those who have eyes to see, and plainly heard by those who have ears to hear, although He is in the highest heavens.

II. The Lord Jesus ought not to be hid. Who shall declare how wicked is the attempt to hide the Lord Jesus, who said, "I am the light of the world." Do any attempt it? Yes, many have done so. The Scribes and Pharisees saw clearly enough that He was the Christ; yet they tried to hide Him by saying that He wrought miracles by the power of Beelzebub. This our Lord declared, but nothing else, is the unpardonable sin. The Jews wished Christ to be hid, when they quenched His costly life on Calvary; they wished His words to be hid when they beat the Apostles, and commanded them not to speak in His Name. The Church of Rome has endeavoured to hide Christ under a mass of superstition, and to prevent the people

from seeing Christ in the Gospel by ministering to them in an unknown tongue, and by forbidding the people to read the Scriptures. Christ *ought* not to be hid.

III. Christ cannot be hid. All things prepare for the coronation of Christ. All things, consciously or unconsciously, are being attuned for the glory of Christ. This is God's mighty purpose which all events are unfolding. All things are for Christ and Christ in all things. He cannot be hid. For Christ the vast machinery of providence is kept in beneficent action; all persons, all things, all events, are under His beneficent rule. Over all men's conscience His purpose must prevail, His cause roll on. "He must reign."

J. FLEMING, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 577, new series.

REFERENCE: vii. 24.—G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines*, p. 330.

Chap. vii., vers. 24-30.

THE Syrophenician's Daughter. Notice—

I. The Girl Herself. She was "grievously vexed with a devil." Her case was very sad and strange. All the gods, helpers and physicians, in Tyre and Sidon could not set this girl free. For anything man's skill could do she was beyond all hope and remedy. The sun shines on no sadder sight than a young soul that is the willing slave of Satan. Well may the Church of Christ weep over that soul, as the Syrophenician mother wept over her darling child, whom Satan was claiming as his slave.

II. The Girl's Mother. She was probably a widow, as no mention is made of the girl's father. The girl would thus be all the world to her mother. On earth there is no stronger love than a mother's for her suffering child. This mother was drawn by a secret influence to Jesus Christ. No wonder that she was allured to Him, for He was the Maker of home, the Lover of children, the Exalter of woman, and the Friend of all mankind.

III. The Girl's Saviour. We are surprised at first that Jesus did not hear her on the spot, for He was very ready to be moved by such cases. For once the disciples seemed kinder than the Master; they wished Him to grant the mother's request there and then. But he was wiser and more merciful than they, and therefore He delayed. God's delays are always full of meaning. He brought out this woman's faith and humility, and taught all men that the feast of His love is for Gentile and Jew alike.

IV. The Cure. Look on the girl before she was healed—a perfect picture of wretchedness; such is the soul in sin. Look on the girl after Christ had done His work in her. She lies upon the bed in peace, and her gratitude overflows. Such is the soul in a state of grace. This girl's cure was perfect; she was made whole. To be whole, and to be holy, mean the same thing; the two words come from the same root. Christ's salvation brings true health to the soul. Then Christ cured her, though she was at a distance from Him. Christ has healed many who could not give day and date. Dr. Livingstone tells that he once asked a chief how old he was. All the people around him burst into loud laughter. "The idea," they said, "of a man remembering when he was born!" But they knew that they had been born, though they knew not when. If you have the true signs of the new birth, never trouble yourself about anything else.

J. WELLS, *Bible Children*, p. 213.

REFERENCE: vii. 24-30.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 156.

Chap. vii., vers. 28, 29.—**"And she answered and said unto Him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And He said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter."**

LOWLY-MINDED Perseverance in Prayer.

I. Consider the example of faith we have set us here. Though Apostles were rejected entreating in her behalf, yet this woman "cries unto" our Lord, because He alone could save her. And though she had heard them say He was not sent to those of her race, yet she repeats her entreaty, as confident He could help whom He would; she did not say "Pray for me," or "Entreat for me," but "Help me," as believing the help was in Himself to bestow. But our Lord was pleased to try her yet further and more sharply. He answered, and said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs." Thus, when He did answer her, His words to her were at first more discouraging than silence. He calls the Jews now not sheep only but children, and her nation dogs. He no longer refers to the will of another, "I am not sent," but withholds what she asks, as though it were not in His own judgment meet that it should be granted. But the woman, so far from being disheartened, makes for herself a fresh plea from those very words of His,

"Yes, Lord, yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." She acknowledges herself a dog, and the Jews children, nay masters; but on this very ground she claims to partake a little of the blessed privileges of His presence and healing, so fully enjoyed, though so little valued by those whom she is not reluctant to call children, nay, even masters.

II. And now we may see, partly, why it was our Lord continued so long to refuse her. He knew she would say this; and it was His gracious will to give her occasion to exercise and show forth this faith and humility. Else, if it had been His purpose from the first to deny her, He would have refused her still, for He was not a mere man that He should repent and change His mind, so that it was not in sternness He kept silence, but in order to unfold the concealed treasure of her humility and faith; and also that we might draw from her history a full assurance that, however severe and repeated the discouragements we may meet with in prayer, and in our endeavours after holiness, we have but to persevere in faith with humility, and we shall obtain in the end an abundance of blessings, the more ample the longer our faith is tried.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. vii., p. 28.

REFERENCES: vii. 24-30.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 65. vii. 27, 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1,309. vii. 28.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 50. vii. 28, 29.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 140. vii. 31-7.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 83; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 347.; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 161; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 237.

Chap. vii., vers. 32-5.

I. THE friends brought their suffering friend to ask for him the Lord's healing hand. He did not refuse their prayer. He gave them what they asked. But He sighed as He gave it—sighed, no doubt, with a sense of heaviness and pain, even while He cheered their spirits by granting the boon they asked for. They felt no doubt in asking. They thought they knew quite well that it would be a great blessing to their friend to be restored. The Lord knew more than they did, and He sighed while He granted their prayer. Can we not apply this thought to ourselves? We often wish for things and pray for things for ourselves and our friends, nothing doubting that this or that which we ask will be a great boon and blessing to us or to them. Sometimes

the request is denied, and we are apt to be disappointed and perhaps repining. Sometimes the prayer is granted. May we not think that sometimes the merciful Lord sighs as He grants it, knowing what we little know, that perhaps it will turn out not for our good but for our hurt that we should have what we have asked? foreseeing that it will bring us perhaps into temptations and dangers, which otherwise we might escape.

II. But the particular prayer offered in the case before us seems to suggest still more particular reflections. The sufferer in this case was deaf and well-nigh speechless. The Lord gave him back both his hearing and his voice, and sighed to give them. Was a man sure to be better and please God better and die more happily because his restored power of hearing brought all this multitude of new things to his thoughts and knowledge? And, again, his loosened tongue, was it so sure that the gift of voice so long withheld would bring him nothing but good? Was it certain that the loosened tongue would always be employed in uttering good and wholesome words, and that a sacred watch would be set over the door of his lips, now at last made vocal with articulate sounds? No doubt it was in the anticipation of a future which man could not foresee that the Lord sighed even in the midst of His act of mercy, and gave the boon desired, but with fear and heaviness and distress of mind. The narrative may well set us on thinking how it may be with ourselves—whether, thinking of our own way of living and acting, our possession of all these precious senses and powers has really been and is a blessing to us, so that the Lord may be thought to have given them to us in love and mercy, or whether we should rather think that He sighed in giving them.

G. MOBERLY, *Plain Sermons at Brightstone*, p. 134.

Chap. vii., vers. 32-7.

THE Deaf and Dumb.

I. Our Lord healed the deaf and dumb man miraculously, by means at which we cannot guess, which we cannot even conceive. But the healing signified at least two things—that the man could be healed, and that the man ought to be healed; that his bodily defect—the retribution of no sin of his own—was contrary to the will of that Father in heaven who willeth not that one little one should perish. But Jesus sighed likewise. There was in Him a sorrow, a compassion, most human and most Divine. It may have been that there was something too of a Divine weariness—I dare not say impatience, seeing how

patient He was then, and how patient He has been since for more than eighteen hundred years—of the folly and ignorance of man, who brings on himself and on his descendants these and a hundred other preventable miseries, simply because he will not study and obey the physical laws of the universe; simply because he will not see that those laws which concern the welfare of his body are as surely the will of God as those which concern the welfare of his soul; and that therefore it is not merely his interest but his solemn duty to study and to obey them, lest he bear the punishment of his own neglect and disobedience.

II. Christ had indeed some good seed in his field. He had taught men by His miracles, as He had taught them by His parables, to whom nature belonged, and whose laws nature obeyed. And the cessation of miracles after the time of Christ and His Apostles had taught, or ought to have taught, mankind a further lesson—the lesson that henceforth they were to carry on for themselves, by the faculties which God had given them, that work of healing and deliverance which He had begun. Miracles like prophecies, were to vanish away; but charity—charity which devotes itself to the welfare of the human race—was to abide for ever. Christ, as I said, had some good seed; but an enemy—we know not whence or when, certainly within the three first centuries of the Church—came and sowed tares among that wheat. Then began men to believe that man's body was the property of Satan, and his soul only the property of God. No wonder if in such a temper of mind the physical amelioration of the human race stood still. How could it be otherwise, while men refused to see in facts the acted will of God, and sought, not in God's universe, but in the dreams of their own brain, for glimpses of that Divine and wonderful order by which the Eternal Father and the Eternal Son are working together for ever through the Eternal Spirit for the welfare of the universe?

C. KINGSLEY, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 48.

Chap. vii., ver. 33.—"And He took him aside from the multitude."

I. OUR Lord seems to have taken this man apart. He may have intended the multitude to follow with their eyes that which He was about, that the might that there was in the action, the might that underlay the deed, should be dwelt upon, and so should sink more surely into their spirits. As we too follow the Redeemer, may we not feel that in our lives He has taken us apart from the multitude? We have had moments—awful

precious moments they were—when something of God's mercy has made us feel that God and we exist alone in this mighty universe, something that has shut out the crowd, drowned the noise, stopped the wheels of the world, taken us into a kind of sacred solitude, and made us feel in deepest earnestness, "I live, God lives; my God and my Lord." While God can have compassion upon numbers, while we can understand the Lord Jesus lifting up His eyes and seeing the multitudes being moved with compassion, yet that same Blessed One is also the Good Shepherd who leaveth the heavenly Jerusalem, leaves the ninety-and-nine perfect of God's hundred beings, and going to seek and to save the one that is lost.

II. And yet, mark the sadness of the Divine Healer. He looked to heaven and He sighed. That sigh must be part of the perfect revelation of the Father. In that sigh, as in all else, there is a portion, a fragment, of God's love to us. May it not be that He was bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows at the very moment that He was healing them and having compassion upon them? And in this we learn the truth, that there is no self-sacrifice, there is no errand of mercy, there is no ministry of love, there is no work of goodness, there is no great deed of kindness, which does not involve painstaking and the giving up of self. Any alleviation of human woe must be at a cost. Imagine what lay upon His heart; imagine to the purest, holiest manhood what it was to come in contact with the man with the unclean spirit. And in all the ministries of our sorrowing and enfeebled humanity you may be sure that there are none that are Christ-like that are not touched with the shadows of the Cross.

T. J. ROWSELL, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 343.

Chap. vii., vers. 33, 34.—"He . . . touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened."

THE Pattern of Service.

I. We have here set forth the foundation and condition of all true work for God in our Lord's heavenward look. We are fully warranted in supposing that that wistful gaze to heaven means, and may be taken to symbolise, our Lord's conscious direction of thought and spirit to God as He wrought His work of mercy. The heavenward look is (1) the renewal of our own vision of the calm verities in which we trust, the recourse for ourselves to the realities which we desire that others should see; (2) the heavenward look draws new strength from the

source of all our might; (3) it will guard us from the temptations which surround all our service, and the distractions which lay waste our lives.

II. We have here pity for the evils we would remove set forth by the Lord's sigh. Mark how in us, as in our Lord, the sigh of compassion is connected with the look to heaven. It follows upon that gaze. The evils are more real, more terrible, by their startling contrast with the unshadowed light which lives above cloud-racks and mists. Habitual communion with God is the root of the truest and purest compassion. It at once supplies a standard by which to measure the greatness of man's godlessness, and therefore of his gloom, and a motive for laying the pain of these upon our hearts, as if they were our own.

III. We have here loving contact with those whom we would help set forth in the Lord's touch. Wherever men would help their fellows, this is a prime requisite—that the would-be helper should come down to the level of those whom he desires to aid. Such contact with men will win their hearts, as well as soften ours. It will make them willing to hear, as well as us wise to speak. Let us preach the Lord's touch as the source of all cleansing. Let us imitate it in our lives, that "if any will not hear the word, they may without the word be won."

IV. We have here the true healing power, and the consciousness of wielding it set forth in the Lord's authoritative word. The reflection of Christ's triumphant consciousness of power should irradiate our spirits as we do His work, like the gleam from gazing on God's glory which shone on the lawgiver's stern face while He talked with men. We have everything to assure us that we cannot fail. The tearful sowing in the stormy winter's day has been done by the Son of man. For us there remains the joy of harvest—hot and hard work indeed, but gladsome too.

A. MACLAREN, *The Secret of Power*, p. 26.

PECULIARITIES in the Miracle of Decapolis.

I. It cannot have been without meaning, though it may have been without any efficaciousness to the healing of disease, that Christ employed the outward signs used in this miracle. Some purpose must have been subserved, forasmuch as we may be sure that there was never anything useless or superfluous in the actions of our Lord. And the reason why Christ thus touched the defective organs, before uttering the word which was to speak them into health, may be found, as is generally

allowed, in the circumstances of the man on whom the miracle was about to be wrought. This man, you will observe, does not seem to have come to Christ of his own accord; it is expressly stated, "And they bring unto Him one that was deaf," etc. The whole was done by the relatives or friends of the afflicted individual; for anything that appears to the contrary, he himself may have had no knowledge of Jesus. Our Lord took him aside from the multitude, because His attention was likely to be distracted by the crowd, and Christ wished to fix it on Himself as the Author of his cure. The man was deaf, so that no question could be put to him, and he had an impediment in his speech which would have prevented his replying. But he could see and he could feel what Christ did; and therefore our Lord supplied the place of speech, by touching the tongue and putting His finger into the ears,—for this was virtually saying that He was about to act on those organs,—and by looking up to heaven, for this was informing the deaf man that the healing power must come from above.

II. Consider next whether the possession of miraculous power did not operate upon Christ in a manner unlike that in which it would, most probably, operate on ourselves. When He did good, He manifested no feeling of pleasure. On the contrary, you might have thought it a pain to Him to relieve misery; for the narrative tells us that, at the instant of giving utterance to the omnipotent word, He showed signs as of a burdened and disquieted spirit; "He sighed"—not, He smiled—not, He rejoiced; but "He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened." It is no undue inference from the circumstance of Christ's sighing at the instant of working the miracle before us, when we take it as evidence of a depression of spirit which would not give way before even that most happy-making thing, the making others happy. Of all the incidental proofs of our Lord's having been "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," there is, perhaps, none of a more touching or plaintive character than is thus furnished by our text.

H. MELVILL, *Sermons on Less Prominent Facts*, vol. i., p. 208.

Chap. vii., ver. 34.—"And looking up to heaven, He sighed."

I. THE general study of this story would furnish several very excellent and edifying lessons suggested by our Lord's action in working this miracle upon the shore of Decapolis. (1) We might note the wide reach of the Master's zeal. Jesus had just come from Tyre and Sidon, clear across in a heathen land; He

was now in the midst of some Greek settlements, on the eastern shore of the Sea of Tiberius. We see how He appears thus going upon a foreign mission. (2) We might dwell upon the need of friendly offices in apparently hopeless cases. (3) We might also mention the manipulations of our Saviour as illustrating the ingenuity of real sympathy. (4) We observe our Lord's respect for everyone's private reserves of experience. "And He took him aside from the multitude privately." (5) We notice the naturalness of all great services of good. At the supremely majestic moments of His life our Lord became simpler in utterance and behaviour than at any other time. He fell back on the sweet and pathetic speech of His mother-tongue.

II. The singular peculiarity of this story, however, is what might be made the subject of more extended remark. Three things meet us in their turn. (1) Why did our Lord sigh when He was looking up to heaven. Everyone is aware of the pleasure it gives to bring cure to a chronic weakness, or give a hope in the place of humiliation. Somehow our Saviour seems depressed, and we look for a reason. But in the narrative there is furnished not even so much as a hint for our help. (2) We are left in this case to conjecture. And in a general way, perhaps, it would be enough to say, that there was something like an ejaculatory prayer in this sigh of Jesus' soul; but more likely there was in it the outbreaking of sad and weary sympathy with the suffering of a fallen race like ours. It may be He sighed (*a*) because there was so much trouble in the world everywhere; (*b*) because there were many who made such poor work in dealing with their trouble; (*c*) because He could not altogether alleviate the trouble He found; (*d*) because the trouble He met always had its origin and aggravation in sin; (*e*) because so few persons were willing to forsake their sins which made the trouble. (3) Christians need more sighs. They are a royal priesthood, and they have an office of intercession to exercise. There was a day when Jehovah sent an angel with an inkhorn by his side through Jerusalem, to set a mark upon the foreheads of those who, in their sad hearts, kept up a great masterful, pitiful yearning for sinners' conversion, and a cry against the abominations of sin.

C. S. Robinson, *Sermons on Neglected Texts*, p. 281.

I. This is not the only record of the sighs and tears and troubled heart of Jesus. We are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews that in the days of His flesh He offered up supplications

with strong crying and tears. By the grave of Lazarus, when He saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping, He groaned in the spirit, "and the silent tears streamed down His face." He wept aloud over the hypocrisy and crime of Jerusalem. Truly, He was a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

II. But on two of the occasions on which we are told that Jesus sighed and wept, He was immediately about to dispel the cause of the misery. He sighed because He was not thinking only of the individual case. That He had power to remedy; but how many myriads were there of the bereaved whom He could not thus console? of the deaf and dumb who in this world could never hear and never speak? Even in the individual cases there was, to His quick sympathy, cause enough to sigh for the wreck caused by the sin of man and the malice of Satan, in deforming the beauty of God's fair creation. His sigh for these was not the sigh of powerlessness—it was the sigh of sympathy. But more than this, He was thinking of all the world, looking down to the very depths of its drear abyss of sorrow. His act of healing could be but a drop in the ocean.

III. In that poor afflicted man our Lord saw but one more sign of that vast crack and flaw which sin causes in everything which God has made. (1) Jesus had seen, laid stark upon the bier, the widow's only son. He had seen the little maid of Jairus lying pale and cold. He had seen Mary weeping for Lazarus dead. And as He looked out upon a world of death, can you wonder if, looking up to heaven, He sighed? (2) This, alas! was not all, and was not the worst. Sickness may be cured and pain assuaged; and Time lays his healing hand on the wounds of death. But the ravages of sin! there is mischief and unmingled mischief there. Can you wonder if, as Jesus looked on the world of sin, He looked up to heaven and sighed? (3) Our Lord saw all the sorrow; He did not ignore it; He sighed for it; He wept for it; He prayed for it; but not for one moment did He despair for it; nay, He worked to lighten it, leaving us thereby, as in all things, an example that we should follow His steps.

F. W. FARRAR, *Ephphatha: Sermons*, p. 1.

SORROW in Healing.

Our Lord sighed, we cannot doubt,—

I. At the thought of that destructive agency of which He had before Him one example. Here was one whom Satan

had bound. Here was an illustration of that reign of sin unto death to which the whole world bears witness. This deaf-and-dumb man reminded Christ of the corruption that had passed over God's pure creation; and therefore, looking up to heaven, He sighed.

II. But there was more than this, as we all feel at once, in that sigh. That outward bondage was but the token of an inward thraldom. Whether healed or not in this life, no bodily infirmity can have more than a temporary duration. Death must end it. But not so that spiritual corruption of which the other was but a sign. That inward ear which is stopped against God's summons, that voice of the heart which refuses to utter His praise—these things are of eternal consequence. And while bodily infirmities and disorders are occasional and partial in their occurrences, spiritual disease is universal. It overspreads every heart. Christ's thoughts at that moment were directed to the sins of the whole world, feeling them as a sore burden laid upon His soul, and made by man's obstinacy too heavy even for Him to bear.

III. He sighed therefore, we may say, further, from a sense of the disproportion in actual extent between the ruin and the redemption. The ruin universal. All the world guilty before God. Every soul of man corrupted by estrangement from God. And yet the great multitude refusing to be redeemed. And again, through the simple negligence and cold-heartedness of the professed Church of Christ, to how few, comparatively speaking, does the message of life come at all! Generation after generation, since the word was first spoken which bade the Church go forth into all the world, and evangelise the whole creation, has fallen asleep utterly ignorant of that holy name, for lack sometimes of a sender and sometimes of a messenger. And this even until now; and even without remorse, without shame, without any vigorous or at least adequate efforts to repair the wrong. Might not He who foresaw these things sigh within Himself as He plucked one brand from the burning? Might He not sorrowfully contrast the price paid with the possession purchased—the multitude of the redeemed with the fewness of the saved?

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 279.

I. OUR Lord may have sighed (1) As He contemplated the afflicted one before Him. (2) As He viewed the desolation and disaster which moral evil had been the means of spreading in

the world. (3) The sigh may have been the result of that feeling of sadness which comes over our hearts even in moments when all things suggest joy. These feelings are more reasonable than we suppose. The tears that steal forth unbidden at the wedding feast, the sigh which love heaves over the cradled treasure of the nursery, are not empty exhibitions of a feeble hysteria. They have their roots in sober truth. It is the shadow of the future which calls forth that sadness. Life's experiences tell us that, notwithstanding all that hope has prophesied, there have been failures and mishaps—that many a golden morning has been followed by a stormy afternoon and a dark and disastrous eventide. It is the thought, though only half realised, of the shipwrecks of life which prompts the sigh and compels the unbidden tear. Thus it was, I think, with Christ. He knew, as we and all men know, that the boon He was about to bestow might prove no real blessing.

II. Yet Christ did not withhold the boon. If there crossed His mind all the evil, the rancour, derision, and scandal which the unfettered tongue might occasion, He did not on that account stay the hand of His benevolence. Freely, ungrudgingly, were His miracles of love performed, though it is too much to suppose that the recipients of His mercy always made good use of their restored senses or newly won faculties. Though the boon may be used for evil, Christ does not withhold it.

III. There is a remedy for the evils that accompany our freedom. Christ, while He teaches us that the remedy is not to be sought in depriving man of the gift, points by His conduct where the real remedy is to be sought. It is by conferring an additional and guiding gift; not by withholding one boon, but by bestowing another, does He suggest to us the true course of conduct. There is another "Ephphatha." He speaks "Be opened," and the tongue is loosed; but the ear is unstopped also. The tongue is set free to speak, and it may be the instrument of untold harm; but the ear is open, and there is a voice which speaks truths in tones of unearthly sweetness, and that voice the sufferer can now hear. While therefore He bestows the faculty of speech, He bestows the opportunity of hearing those glad and soul-elevating principles of righteousness and forgiveness and love which will fill the loosened tongue with joy, and put a new song of praise in that silent mouth. The Ephphatha of gift and the Ephphatha of new opportunities for good go hand in hand.

BISHOP BOYD-CARPENTER, *Sermon Preached May 28th*, 1876.

From the text we learn—

I. The duty of compassion. The world has, in all ages, deeply needed, and in this age still deeply needs, the lesson of pity. We profess and call ourselves Christians; have we yet learnt the simplest and earliest element in the sigh of the Saviour, the divineness of mercy, of compassion, and of love?

II. Yet we must learn the lesson not of compassion only, but of *energy* therewith. Compassion which ends in compassion may be nothing more than the luxury of egotism; but the sigh of Jesus was but an instant's episode in a life of toil. If His sigh binds us to pity all sin and sorrow, it binds us no less to bend every effort of our lives towards the end that sin may cease and be forgiven, and sorrow flee away. (1) The world is full of sorrow. The sigh of Christ pledges us, as our first duty, not to add to that sorrow, either actively or passively, either directly or indirectly, by our pride or self-indulgence, by cruelty or malice, for our gain or our gratification, by taking unfair advantages, or by speaking false, bitter, and unwholesome words. (2) The world is full of disease. The sigh of Christ pledges us not only to be gentle and sympathetic and helpful to all who are afflicted, but also to strive by pureness and kindness, by high example and sound knowledge, to improve the conditions which shall make life sweet and healthy, cheerful and genial, vigorous and pure. (3) The world is full of sin. The sigh of Jesus pledges us ourselves to keep innocency, and do the thing that is right; not to set examples which lead to sin; to lead men, both by our life and doctrine, to that Saviour who died for sin, and who can alone forgive it, and cleanse us from its guilt and power.

III. A lesson of hope (1) For ourselves; the perfect confidence with which each one of us may throw ourselves upon Christ's love; the infinite conviction with which we may each of us say, "Christ died for *me*." (2) For all the world. Who was it that sighed and said, "Ephphatha, Be opened"? Ah, it takes the fourfold Gospel to answer that question! It was He whom St. Matthew set forth as the Divine Messiah who fulfilled the past; and St. Mark as the Son of God, filling with power and awfulness the present; and St. Luke as the Seeker and Saviour, to all ages, of the lost; and St. John in the spiritual Gospel as the Incarnate Word. God is *everywhere;* and the footsteps of Him who sighed for the miseries of man have illuminated even that unknown land which every man must enter.

F. W. Farrar, *Ephphatha: Sermons*, p. 229.

THERE is one trait, and only one, in which, though it may be our necessity, and perhaps our privilege, yet it can scarcely be called our duty, to be like our great Master. And yet that trait is almost the largest in our Saviour's character—sadness of spirit; and the reason why we are not to copy our Saviour's sadness is evident: it is twofold. One, because He Himself is happy now, and the duty of being like Him as He is, is greater than the duty of being like Him as He was; so that we are most copying Christ when we are exceedingly happy. And the other reason is, that those sorrows of Jesus were the very materials out of which He was making the Church's joy. Therefore to imitate them would be as if a man should think to copy a rainbow by painting a shower. For when we are sad, we are so far frustrating the sadnesses of Jesus. In all our Saviour's sorrows—I do not enter now into the mysteries of Gethsemane and Calvary—but in all the sorrows of our Saviour's life among men, there are two features characteristic, beautiful, and instructive. (1) Our Saviour's recorded sadnesses were all for others. (2) His sorrow was never an idle sentiment. The sigh of Jesus when He healed the deaf-and-dumb man at Decapolis was—

I. The Sigh of Earnestness. Because it says that, "looking up to heaven, He sighed." Some connect the two words, and account that the sigh is a part of the prayer, an expression of the intensity of the working of our Lord's heart when He was supplicating to the Father.

II. The Sigh of Beneficence. He who never gave us anything but what was bought by His own suffering—so that every pleasure is a spoil, purchased by His blood—did now by the sigh, and under the feeling that He sighed, indicate that He purchased the privilege to restore to that poor man the senses he had lost.

III. The Sigh of Brotherhood. The scene before Him would be to His mind but a representation of thousands of thousands. His comprehensive thought, starting from that point, would travel on, till it embraced, in one dark union, all the miseries with which this earth is filled.

IV. The Sigh of Holiness. Do you suppose our Saviour's mind could think of all the physical evil, and not go on to the deeper moral causes from which it sprang? Doubtless, in those closed ears and that chained tongue, He read, too plainly written, the fall—the distance—the degradation—the corruption—the universal defilement of our world. He sighed. That is

the way in which perfect holiness looked on the sins of the universe.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 198.

REFERENCES: vii. 34.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 109; W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. ii., p. 49; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 152; C. Kingsley, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 358. *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 394. vii. 36.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 314. vii. 36, 37.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 76.

Chap. vii., ver. 37.—**"And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."**

Low Estimate of the Church's Work.

Let us compare the danger, to which we are open, of taking a low estimate of the Church with the popular view once taken of the ministry of our Blessed Lord.

I. There were few, when He was alive on earth, who came to Him in the spirit of Nicodemus, seeking truth. The greater number followed, like the multitude at Capernaum, not because they saw His miracle, but because they ate of the loaves and were filled. Two of the disciples owned how they were mortified at the loss of their political expectations from Jesus. Can we suppose that there was a more spiritual mind in those who cheered Him on this road with such applause as this, "He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak"?

II. Then, as to our own danger, what the miracles of Christ and His beneficence were to the witnesses of His ministry, the indirect but manifest effects of Christianity in the world are to us. Let us take the case of public charities in this and other Christian countries. Who would not point to them as evidence of the power of the Gospel? And yet, are these public charities a gauge of religion? Men give largely, or admire those who do so, under a vague impression that benevolence is equivalent to God. (2) Again, education is one of the most obvious benefits arising from the influence of Christianity in this age. But, great and precious as are the benefits conferred by education, let no one imagine that the best of schools atones for an ill-appointed Church.

III. There is a high and admirable sense in which the description of Christ in the text may be read. "He hath done all things well"—so the redeemed in heaven will say of Him. "He

hath done all things well," and not according to the right and wrong of this world, but well according to the judgment of eternity —well, insomuch as the work answered perfectly to the design, the end to the beginning. When did He say that His work was finished? Was it when crowds followed Him whom He had fed in their hunger or healed in their sicknesses or raised from the dead? No; but at the moment when His admirers forsook Him, and left Him in the hands of His enemies. When the world stood only near Him that they might gaze on His misery, when He disappointed all popular expectations and was despised and rejected of men, then, in the hearing of God, when His voice alone of all His bodily powers survived His agony, He said of His work, "It is finished."

C. W. FURSE, *Sermons at Richmond*, p. 121.

THE Gift of Hearing.

I. It is Christ who enables any one of us to hear any of the common sounds that enter into our ears as we walk out on an August day. If you have heard the singing of the birds or the running of the stream or the voices of children, recollect it was Christ who caused you to hear them. He fills the earth and air with all melodies, and He gives to men the power of taking them in. By giving back hearing to this man who had lost it, He declared this: He said, I am the Giver of hearing, the power comes from Me. Think how wonderful that is.

II. There is another kind of deafness besides that which cannot take in sounds. We may hear sounds, and yet the words that are within the sounds may never reach us. They may float about us, and seem as if they were coming unto us. And then we may feel just the same as if they had never been uttered. As far as we are concerned, we might as well have been a hundred miles away. But if they are words of health and life—words that come from the good God—words that are to make us right and true men—words that are to make all that is past fresh and new to us, and what is going on around us good and not evil, and what is to be hereafter through all ages blessed,—it is a very sad thing, is it not, that they should be all lost upon us? But must it be so? Shall it be so with any of us? What, when it is written, "He maketh the deaf to hear"! When we can say, Lord, Thou hast sent us these words; they are Thine! Once more say, Ephphatha; Be opened! to me and to all who have not received the good news of Thy New Testament into their hearts.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons in Country Churches*, p. 10.

I. Our Lord, it is remarked, took this man aside, as in the eighth chapter He is represented as taking the blind man by the hand, and leading him out of the village, before He restored his sight, probably for this reason in both cases—that both patients might be moved out of the noise and bustle of the wondering crowd, and thus the lesson of the heavenly power and goodness of Him who healed them might sink more quietly and deeply into their hearts. Unlike the pictures of those workers of mere wonders which men's fancies have devised, the Lord is ever represented as anxious in His great works for this, almost above all things—that the healing of their bodies might be, for the cured, the outward and visible sign of His power to heal their souls. And He knew that for this purpose each character required its own peculiar treatment; sometimes the patient's temptation was to lose the sobering and hallowing impression in the midst of much talk, while he professed to be showing forth the mercy he had received among his friends and acquaintances; sometimes (as in the case of the demoniac in the country of the Gadarenes, whose dwelling had before been in the tombs) the best help to the patient's holiness was to be found in the society of his friends, and in no solitary brooding over his state, but in telling to all how great things the Lord had done for him.

II. In the instance before us, the Lord's solicitude for the sufferer and regard for the peculiarities of his case seems, it has been remarked, to be shown even in the form in which He sets about the miracle. The man could not hear, and therefore the Lord spoke to him by signs; He put His fingers into his ears, and touched his tongue, and looked up to heaven, to let him more readily understand the blessing which was intended, and the source from which it was to come. He sighed, too, as He wept afterwards at the grave of Lazarus, thinking in both cases how vast was the amount of spiritual evil that remained to be vanquished, and how easy it was, comparatively, to cure men's bodily diseases, or even to raise them bodily after death to life again; how difficult to regenerate their souls. This mixture of anxiety to effect a spiritual along with a bodily cure is one great source of deep interest in our Lord's miracles. He is not, as we have said, the mere wonder-worker, manifesting His Divine commission by a supernatural power that awes us into conviction. His power is not more remarkable than His love—a love which begins with the body, but is not at rest till it has laboured for the soul. And hence that curiosity is very natural which has led men to ask whether they cannot learn

something as to the ultimate spiritual fate of those who were blessed to be thus the objects of His solicitude. But God has not thought fit to gratify this curiosity, and we may be content to leave the subjects of it in the hands of Him who so evidently cared for them, and who does all things well, both for our bodies and our souls.

A. C. Tait, *Lessons for School Life*, p. 183.

References: vii. 37.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. ii., p. 104; C. Girdlestone, *A Course of Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 273; J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, p. 245; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 32; J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 14th series, p. 5. vii. 38.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 114. viii. 1, 2.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, Part I., p. 254. viii. 1-8.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 146. viii. 1-9.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 13; J. C. Harrison, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 321; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 165. viii. 1-26.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 237. viii. 2.—J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 189. viii. 2, 3.—G. Huntington, *Sermons for Holy Seasons*, p. 47; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 225; G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 41.

Chap. viii., vers. 1-9.

We have here—

I. A picture of the forsaken Church of Christ. (1) Much people were gathered round the Lord. Many are gathered round Him to-day. *Few*, if we think of the immense multitude of those who are called into the Church of Christ; *many*, if we think of the small number of the chosen in all ages, and especially in our own day. (2) They have nothing to eat, said the Lord in our Gospel about the four thousand hearers. The same words must be said of the people of Christ now. The soldier needs food, if he is not to grow weary and perish with hunger; the Christian soldier needs both physical and spiritual nourishment. He is in the wilderness. Where shall he find it?

II. The Lord takes pity on His Church. He knows the condition and the need of His own; He knows it even before they themselves are conscious of it, and before they cry to Him He gives them enough and to spare. They gather up the fragments, and find that through His blessing they have become more than the original provision. Fear not then, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.

R. Rothe, *Nachgelassene Predigten*, vol. i., p. 40.

Chap. viii., ver. 4.—"And His disciples answered Him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?"

Bread in the Wilderness.

I. The question of the disciples has been, as all will admit, the natural question of all who have had any time or mind to think from the beginning of the world. There is perhaps no animal that has to spend so large a part of his time in procuring the food he needs as man. And when he has got it, it will not satisfy him as their daily food will satisfy the other creatures. No sooner is he filled than he finds out that man cannot live by bread alone, that he cannot be satisfied from any earthly stores, that he wants something more and has another kind of hunger. The hunger of the soul awakes, and it demands to be satisfied with something—it knows not what, perhaps. And how is this hunger to be satisfied here in the wilderness—in this place of exile, of desolation far from God and home and rest? There is nothing outwardly and visibly belonging to this life on which the immortal soul can feed. Whence, then, is the necessary food to be fetched? Who is to go for it?

II. Men often talk about this life as being a wilderness, and they are right; but do you know why and in what sense? The wilderness is *not* a desert, nor a howling expanse of sand, nor a land of the shadow of death, except at certain times. We are specially told by the Evangelists that there was much grass in the place where Jesus was; in all probability there were plenty of low shrubs as well, and thousands of the brightest flowers; for it was spring time, and the early rains had transformed the earth. Now our life is just like the wilderness in this sense: very often it is full of beauty, of grace, of life, of promise. There are times when every element of hope and contentment seems present in abundance. But all this beauty and promise will not satisfy the soul of man, however much it may please his fancy and his taste. Hence the force of the question, How shall a man satisfy these men here in the wilderness? It is easy enough to please people in the wilderness, if you go at the right time. The beauty of the landscape, the buoyancy of the air, the exhilarating sense of freedom and expanse—all these are delightful. But to satisfy them, that is what we cannot do; that can only be done, in the wilderness, by the Divine power of Christ. He can and will feed them; and it makes no difference to Him how many the

people, how few the loaves; they shall all be satisfied, and go home in the strength of that food.

R. WINTERBOTHAM, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 173.

REFERENCES: viii. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1,885. viii. 4-8.—C. Kingsley, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 250.

Chap. viii., ver. 5.—"How many loaves have ye?"

OUR Lord Jesus Christ, being about to work a miracle of omnipotent grace, first bids His disciples to count over their own little stores, to see what they have towards it; what they have, however trifling in amount, of the same kind and sort with the thing wanted; they producing that, He will do the rest; nay, He will do all, inasmuch as all that they can bring is absolutely valueless and of nought for the object. "How many loaves have ye?" is His preliminary question in everything. When the seven loaves are brought to Him, then and then only does He begin to work. The applications of this truth are many and various.

I. We see it in Inspiration. God condescended to use human infirmity as the vehicle of our enlightening, leaving it infirm, leaving it human, where it matters not that we should know, but strengthening it out of weakness and lifting it above earth wheresoever He willed that it should know the thing that is, inasmuch as it had in it the thing which we must do or the thing which we must be. "How many loaves have ye?" Then, using these, Christ will multiply and bless. Bring forth all your gifts, such as they are, of understanding and culture and knowledge and utterance,—bring them forth; and then Christ, taking them at your hands, shall give them back to you blessed and blessing, to be to generations yet unborn the light of their life and the consolation of their sleep and of their awakening.

II. That which is true of the Book is true also of the life. "How many loaves have ye?" Christ puts that question, day by day, to each one of us. There be many that say, I have no work for Christ and no mission. Mine is no lofty station; mine is no large sphere; mine is no eloquent tongue or popular manner or telling influence. Let me live out my little day, and go back to the ground from which I was taken. Gravely, sorrowfully, yet earnestly and gently too, does Christ address Himself to you to-day, saying, Think yet once more—how many loaves have ye? Nothing? Not a soul? Not a body? Not time? Not one friend or neighbour to whom a kind word may

be spoken, or a kind deed done, in the name, for the love, of Jesus? Bring that—do that, say that—as what thou hast; very small, very trivial, very worthless, if thou wilt; yet remember the saying, "She hath done what she could."

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Temple Sermons*, p. 166.

Chap. viii., ver. 6.—"And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people."

FEEDING the Four Thousand.

I. Observe the extreme tenderness and love of Christ in this work of power. In it He taught us (1) To reflect how constantly and in how many ways He still exercises the same wonderful power of feeding His people by multiplying their food. See in the harvest how every year a much mightier work even than filling the five thousand or the four thousand is done in every land—I might say in every corn-field. (2) Again, we can hardly think of the corn of wheat sown in the ground, and multiplied so wonderfully for His people's food, without being reminded of another corn of wheat—I mean the Body of the Lord Himself, dying and being buried, and springing up into the enormous multitudes of Christian men and women. All of them, in every country and in every age, He feeds with the perpetually multiplied food of His spiritual Body and Blood.

II. Observe, again, that our Lord, though He did this miracle twice over, did it only twice. He did not interpose His Divine power every time His disciples were hungry, or save them from the ordinary industry and forethought which should provide themselves with food. Twice He did it, to prove His power, to confirm their faith, to teach us various good and useful lessons; but neither when He was among His disciples, not afterwards, did He encourage them to expect miraculous helps to save them in times of difficulty and danger, still less to save them from the consequences of their own neglect and improvidence.

III. Our Lord, in doing this wonder, does not do it without some use of means. Seven loaves and a few small fishes are, no doubt, quite insufficient for so great a number of people; still, He uses the seven loaves and the few small fishes. He does not put the small quantity aside, and create a great deal new. No; He blesses the little, and it becomes enough.

IV. Again, He used the help of His disciples. Men in themselves are, no doubt, of no power to feed the souls of men.

They cannot of themselves reach their brethren's hearts, or do them spiritual good by any power of their own. But yet the Lord of the feast employs them. He does not ordinarily act direct, but makes use of men and things to act by; men to teach, water to baptize, bread and wine to eat and drink; all in themselves utterly weak and powerless; but when authorised and blessed by God, made powerful to win souls, and to regenerate souls, and to feed souls, and to save souls unto eternal life.

G. MOBERLY, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 191.

REFERENCES: viii. 8.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. ii., p. 214. viii. 9.—W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. ii., p. 66. viii. 10-21.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 157; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 170. viii. 11.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 294.

Chap. viii., vers. 12-25.

I. VER. 12.—"And He sighed deeply in His spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign?" etc. The sign in this case was morally suggestive. It must have been one of the great troubles of His sad and weary life to be continually carrying in His own bosom secrets which He would not divulge. The sigh was an expression of self-restraint. Misery has often relieved herself in speech; but this Man of sorrows had added to His many griefs the woe of often suffering in misunderstood and resentful silence.

II. Ver. 14.—"Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf." Dwell for a moment upon the circumstance of the disciples having but one loaf in the ship; you will find that there is an explanatory word in this verse, and that word is "*forgotten*." If these words are put together, we shall find a revelation of poverty which is far from being inapplicable to the circumstances of many in the present day. If forgetful, thoughtless, indolent men are assisted in their straits and embarrassments, we do but offer a bounty to incompetence and inconsideration, and thus do more harm than good.

III. In the 13th verse the Saviour says, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." In this He teaches us to beware of *bad little things*. In relation to the meal the leaven is small; yet the leaven will operate until it has subdued every particle of the meal to itself. Thus it is with many bad principles and pernicious habits; they may be apparently little and trivial in themselves, yet in them there is a vitality which never rests

until it has penetrated from centre to circumference. Under this admonition the disciples, deficient in spiritual refinement and vision, instantly recur to the circumstance that they have but one loaf in the ship. Christ has ever been obstructed by materialising men. The material never can understand the spiritual; hence it is that if we come to Christ in the mere letter, we never can comprehend the spirit of His language; but if we read Him in the light of consciousness while we are prostrated before the altar of His Cross, we are led into the deepest things of His heart, which in our present imperfect state we are permitted to attain.

PARKER, *Wednesday Evenings at Cavendish Chapel*, p. 110.

REFERENCES: viii. 15.—D. Fraser, *The Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 135. viii. 17, 18.—Beecher, *Plymouth Pulpit Sermons*, 5th series, p. 251. viii. 19-21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1,822. viii. 21.—G. Macdonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 48.

Chap. viii., vers. 22 5.

THE Gradual Healing of the Blind Man.

This miracle has a peculiarity, in which it stands absolutely alone, and that is that the work is done in stages; that the power which at other times has but to speak and it is done here seems to labour, and the cure comes slowly; that in the middle Christ pauses, and, like a physician trying the experiment of a drug, asks the patient if any effect is produced, and, getting the answer that some mitigation is realised, repeats the application, and perfect recovery is the result.

I. First, we have here Christ isolating the man whom He wanted to heal. This fact of a miracle done in intended secrecy, and shrouded in deep darkness, suggests to us the true point of view from which to look at the whole subject of miracles. He wrought the miracles not coldly in order to witness to His mission, but every one of them was a token, because it was an outcome of His own sympathetic heart, brought into contact with human need.

II. We have Christ stooping to a sense-bound nature by the use of material helps. No doubt there was something in this man which made it advisable that these methods should be adopted. They make a ladder by which his hope and confidence might climb to the apprehension of the blessing. And that points to a general principle of the Divine dealings. God stoops to a feeble faith, and gives it outward things by which it may rise to the apprehension of spiritual realities.

III. Lastly, we have Christ's accommodating the pace of His power to the slowness of the man's faith. I take it that the worthiest view of that strangely protracted process, broken up into two halves, by the question that is dropped in the middle, is this, that it was determined by the man's faith, and was meant to increase it. He was healed slowly because he believed slowly. His faith was a condition of his cure, and the measure of it determined the measure of his restoration, and the rate of the growth of his faith settled the rate of the perfecting of Christ's work upon him.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 1st series, p. 261.

REFERENCES: viii. 22-5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 701; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 68.

Chap. viii., vers. 22-6.

THE text shows us—

I. The value of intercessory prayer. We need to pray for ourselves, but it is a poor religion that stops at self. We need the power and the grace of Christ to heal our own hurt; but if we truly realise the presence of Christ, and if we believe in His healing power, we shall seek Him, not only for our own sakes, but for the sake of others too.

II. Christ answers the appeal beyond the asker's expectation. In the healing touch we have a mark or characteristic of common occurrence in our Lord's miracles. The touch is a sign of a great spiritual truth. If Christ is to heal us, our soul must touch Him and He must touch us. There must be a meeting-ground with nothing to intervene between sinner and Saviour.

III. Jesus Christ, who had all power at His command, delayed the progress of a miracle and broke it into two. Had the work been done off-hand, it might discover to us a miracle of power and but little else. He gave sight to the blind; it was divided, delayed, and for a time apparently unsuccessful. The sequel exhibits a still greater work—a miracle of patience. Here Christ shows us the Father. Christ suits His communications to human infirmity; He restrains His power and graduates revelation by our capacity. Our impatience will have results at once. God can abide delay. Christ taught the Word as they were able to hear it. We are apt to take our distorted images for true pictures; far wiser is it to await the open vision, when we shall see face to face. First impressions are not always correct. Christ

must come closer and touch us once again for enlarged and purified vision. "After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly." How many conversions do these words epitomise? They sum up a large series of religious experiences. Light may come by fits and starts. Not all at once, nor even gradually, are some brought to acknowledge their real condition before God. Partial awakening may be followed by times of spiritual collapse and apparent failure of the Holy Spirit's power; there comes at length what we might call a second conversion, or, to speak more correctly, the completion of the work—conversion of heart and life; no longer crude and imperfect views of truth, or dim perceptions, "men seen as trees, walking," but all things seen plainly.

G. WALKER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 43.

REFERENCES: viii. 22-6.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 174; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 11 viii. 23-5.—A. Blomfield, *Sermons in Town and Country*, p. 169. viii. 24, 25.—H. P. Hughes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 217. viii. 24-9.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii, p. 297. viii. 25.—W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. ii., p. 20. viii. 27-30.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 164. viii. 27-33.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 178.

Chap. viii., ver. 31.—**"And He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."**

CHRIST'S Intimation of His Sufferings.

The time from which Jesus began to speak to His disciples of His sufferings was the time at which His Apostles had made open confession of His Godhead. Here then is a point from which to reckon, and on which to reason. We may now start with the inquiry, What inducement led to, and what instruction may be gathered from, the recorded fact, that when Jesus had drawn from His disciples the acknowledgment of His Divinity, then, and not before, He began to tell them of His sufferings.

I. The Apostles could have had none but the most indistinct apprehensions of the office and mission of our Lord, so long as they were ignorant of the death which He had undertaken to die. Christ deferred speaking of His sufferings till His disciples had full faith in His Godhead. As much as to say, "It will be of no avail to speak to them of My death till they are convinced of My Deity. So long as they only know Me as the Son of

man, they will not be prepared to hear of the Cross; when they shall also know Me as the Son of the Living God, then will be the time to tell of ignominy and death."

II. We seem quite justified in gathering from the text, that henceforward our Lord made very frequent mention of His Cross. And what is very observable is, that it seems to have been upon occasions when the disciples were likely to have been puffed up and exalted, that ever after our Lord took special pains to impress upon them that He must be rejected and killed. Learn to expect, and be thankful for, something bitter in the cup, when faith has won the victory, and you have tasted, in no common measure, the powers of the invisible world. Triumph would make us proud, if not followed by humiliation; and the Good Physician who gave His own blood to save us from death will in mercy prevent the fever, by opening a vein. When Christ shows us the crown, He loves us too well, not commonly to follow it with laying on the Cross.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,268.

REFERENCES: viii. 31-8.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 173; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 250.

Chap. viii., ver. 34.—**"And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also, He said unto them, Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."**

I. SUCH were the terms by which Jesus Christ sought to enlist men in His service. They came around Him attracted by His holiness, and curious to know more about Him. He offered them three attractions—self-denial, shame, and absolute surrender. Unless they were content with these, they could not enter His army. We have almost lost sight of the strangeness of the summons. "To take up the Cross" has become a religious phrase. We use it almost mechanically; nay, when we are most reverent, we almost hesitate to apply it to the trials of common life. We shrink from applying it to the man of the world, to the man of business, to the man of cultivated intellect, and perhaps it seems to be peculiarly strained if applied to the very young. And yet it contains the very lesson of Christianity.

II. To take up the Cross daily is to be prepared for what is most painful in the attempt to do your duty. The Cross is, like all burdens, heavy, exhausting, crushing. But it is more. It is degrading also. It fills us with shame. It crushes out of us

our pride, and all that is false in our darling self-esteem. It makes us think less well of our energies at the very time that it taxes them most severely. It says to us, "You must dare to face this duty;" and in the same breath, "How poor and cowardly you must be to dread it!"

III. Some crosses are visible. They are borne, if borne at all, in the sight of others. With strong natures, pride sometimes comes to the help of conscience, and insidiously lends its strong arm to the support of the burden. But there are other kinds of crosses. There are those which no one ever sees, perhaps never suspects. These are not the least formidable. There is (1) the cross of truthfulness; (2) the cross of self-denial in little things; (3) the cross of humility; (4) the cross of temperance. Each heart has its own cross to bear. To many it is the burden of holding fast by God and leading a cheerful, happy life, in the absence of human sympathy. To be willing to take up the Cross is the very essence of the faith of Christ. By this test we may measure our own progress. No laxity in our practice can ever explain away the declaration of our Master, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 197.

Chap. viii., vers. 34-8.

SAVING One's Life by Losing It.

When Christ is preached in our day, men are not ashamed of Him on precisely the same grounds that they were in the early days. Christ is represented by great churches that are emblazoned with art, that represent the wealth of the communities, that have about them a kind of historical charm and a flavour of antiquity, and men are not ashamed of Christ as of old, nor are they likely to be. Neither are men ashamed of Christ doctrinally. Whichever platform you put Him upon, whether you regard Him simply as a Man of genius or as semi-Divine, or as God manifest in the flesh, there is nothing that should lead men to be ashamed of Him. Look at the different ways in which men unconsciously to themselves are ashamed of Christ.

I. There are a great many men who are more or less studious, more or less thoughtful, more or less uneasy; it has been so for several years; they have been satisfied that they have not been living right, that they ought to come to a higher form of religious development, and they hope that the time will come when they can do this; but what is the reason that they never

take this step in advance, and break out into that higher development? If you trace it, you find that oftentimes there is a sense of shame of their part. A man shrinks from letting the community know that he really is concerned about himself; and he is kept back by what may be said, and what may be thought.

II. There are a great many men who are hoping that they are Christians. They stealthily snatch at prayer; they turn to the Word of God, and read that a good deal, but they are not willing that it should be known. They are trying to live Christian lives secretly. There is connected with this a good deal of the element of shame, either directly or by inference.

III. We are growing old in this world. Things perish in the using. On everything in life is the mark of change. Spring comes out of winter and changes into summer. Summer with its growth moves into autumn. Autumn is swallowed up in the winding-sheet of winter. So of all things in human life. Youth running towards manhood; manhood declining towards old age; and beyond old age there is a life that grows broader and broader, brighter and brighter. After this life, all that encumbered men and bound them here shall be dropped away. There is a life of joy and glory; and to that men are invited, that they may become sons of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. And what is there in that of which any man should be ashamed? What is there not in it which every man should leap to acknowledge with gratitude?

H. W. BEECHER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 202.

REFERENCES: viii. 34-8.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 253. H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 183.

Chap. viii., vers. 35-7.—"For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it," etc.

I. THE confession and rebuke of St. Peter seem to be closely connected with the solemn teaching of the text. The fearfully wrong view which St. Peter had taken of what was consistent with the character and office of our Lord, notwithstanding the wonderful revelation he had received concerning His true being; seems to have suggested, as it were, to our blessed Lord the necessity of publishing clearly and broadly certain essential laws of His kingdom. So He called to Him the people with His disciples also; for the lesson He was about to teach was one for all ears, it could not be too extensively known nor too

carefully pondered; and when He had called them He said, "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Thus He laid down self-denial as the basis of His service. He did not wish any one to follow Him under false notions. As it followed, that *because* He was Christ, *therefore* He must suffer, so it followed that those who would be great in His kingdom must obtain their position, not according to the fashion of this world, but by denying themselves and taking up the cross.

II. To those whom Christ immediately addressed, and those of the times immediately following, these words would be a tower of strength; and even to ourselves, they are very far from useless, if they teach us that no real happiness can be gained by shrinking from Christ's yoke, and that all that we can do for Christ and all that we give up for Him, and, if need be, all that we suffer for Him, will be richly rewarded by Him whom we serve. We learn from the text that an earnest Christian life requires the sacrifice of everything which may be a hindrance to its growth; even a man's life must be jeopardised for that which is his true life, and the gain of all things will be an infinite loss if it entail the sacrifice of our spiritual life. The world is a great prize, judging according to human estimates. It includes all the wealth, the power, the pleasures that human nature is capable of possessing and enjoying; yet what is it, if the man who has gained it has lost himself? its enjoyment can only last for an hour, and the joys of heaven last for evermore.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 278.

REFERENCE: viii. 35.—S. A. Brooke, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 392.

Chap. viii., ver. 36.—"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Two questions meet us on the threshold of this great subject. What is meant by the soul, to which this paramount value is ascribed? And why should there be any natural enmity between the world and the soul? Why should the gain of the whole world be likely to hazard the loss of the soul?

I. The soul is man's higher life; the life, not of the body, nor even of the intellect, but of the feelings, the affections, and the aspirations. A man may ignore this higher life and do his best to drown and stifle it; but he cannot divest himself of it. It is part of himself. Willingly or unwillingly, worthily or unworthily, he must carry it about with him to death and through death,

There is a "for ever" stamped visibly upon it. He can ennoble or he can degrade, but he cannot destroy. To lose the soul is in Scriptural language to spoil this higher life; to quench the Divine Spirit, by whose fire alone it burns; to lose the capacity of caring for God and for all those lofty things which we believe to be dear to God and the natural heritage of man.

II. Why should the gain of the world imperil the soul? Here experience gives the answer. Theoretically it is quite possible to win the world and to win the higher life as well; to seek with ardour, and to enjoy to the full, what are called in pagan language the gifts of fortune; and to consecrate all in the spirit of thankfulness to the service of God and the wants of others. It is possible, because with God all things are possible. But it is hard, terribly hard. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle." Have we not all lived long enough to discover this much, that when our heart is set eagerly upon any of the things of earth, upon success in any shape, bodily or intellectual, we are tempted to sink to the level of that particular object? It peoples and satisfies your imagination. It gives birth to a thousand secondary interests all like itself, none rising higher than its fount, all tending to lead away our thoughts from the higher life, and to make it appear distant and shadowy. If we ask ourselves, How can we know whether we are losing our souls or not? the answer seems to be, You are losing your soul, you are doing, slowly perhaps but surely, what you can to make the restoration, the re-inspiration of your higher life impossible, if you are gradually losing your love for God, your interest in all things high, your unselfish devotion to others, your faith in the paramount claims of duty over your own personal inclinations, however legitimate they may be.

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 259.

REFERENCES: viii. 36.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 92; H. B. Ottley, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 229; E. D. Solomon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 30. viii. 36, 37.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 115; W. J. Cuthbertson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 202; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 94. viii. 38.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 86; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 172; vol. xxvi., p. 315. ix. 1.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 250. ix. 1-4.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 187. ix. 2.—*New Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 39; C. Kingsley, *Village Sermons*, p. 114. ix. 2, 3.—R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 200. ix. 2-8.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 476. ix. 2-9.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 191. ix. 2-10.—*Preacher's Monthly*,

vol. iii., p. 339. ix. 2-13.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 256. ix. 5-13.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 192. ix. 7.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* p. 259.

Chap. ix., ver. 8.—"They saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves."

I. When Jesus thus revealed Himself on the Mount of Transfiguration, He may be said to have taken, by anticipation, so much of that Divine glory with which He is now adorned, in heaven, as would call forth the wonder and admiration, without confounding the faculties, of the beholders.

II. The transfiguration of our Lord afforded a powerful attestation to His Divine character, and the truth of His mission to the world. Moses and Elias would never have appeared to support the pretensions of an impostor.

III. Moreover, the same wondrous transformation on Mount Tabor placed beyond a doubt the fact of the soul's immortality and the resurrection of the body. Not only did the face of the Saviour shine as the sun, and His raiment become white and glistering, but Moses and Elias, also, appeared with Him in glory. What was this but a representation and pledge of the final blessedness of the redeemed. St. Martin of Tours was once meditating in his cell, when a radiant form appeared to him, with a jewelled crown on His head, a countenance resplendent with glory, and with a manner so impressive that it seemed to demand homage and love. The heavenly vision said to St. Martin, "I am Christ; worship Me," and the legend goes on to say that the saint looked upon this glorious form in silence, then gazed upon the hands and asked, "Where is the print of the nails?" Forthwith the vision departed, and St. Martin knew that it was the crafty tempter. The same question, Where is the print of the nails? will relieve many an anxious doubt, and reveal the way of duty.

IV. There are times in the history of God's children, when, the brightest visions having faded away, like the disciples in the text, "they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves." Can there possibly be a happier or more sustaining thought than this? The little word only reminds us, that we need not be afraid for ten thousands of the people that have set themselves in array against us, if Jesus be our Friend. Each trusting heart may claim Him, as if no one else shared in His all-perfect love. J. N. Norton, *Golden Truths*, p. 312.

References: ix. 8.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in a Religious House*,

p. 440. ix. 9-32.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 264. ix. 10.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii, p. 360; J. B. Heard, *Ibid.*, vol. xxiii., p. 260. ix. 14-29.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 197. ix. 15.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 241.

Chap ix., ver. 19.—"He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?"

CHRIST'S Lament over Faithlessness.

I. The first thing that seems to be in this lament is not anger, but a very distinct and very pathetic expression of Christ's infinite pain, because of man's faithlessness. The element of personal sorrow is most obvious here. All that men have ever felt—of how hard it is to keep on working when not a soul understands them, when not a single creature believes in them, when there is nobody that will accept their message, nor that will give them credit for pure motives,—Jesus Christ had to feel, and that in an altogether singular degree. There never was such a lonely soul on this earth as His, just because there never was another so pure and loving.

II. In this short sharp cry of anguish, there may be detected by the listening ear not only the tone of personal hurt, but the tone of disappointed and thwarted love. Because of their unbelief He knew that they could not receive what He desired to give them. We find Him more than once in His life hemmed in, hindered, balked of His purpose,—thwarted in His design—simply because there was nobody with a heart open to receive the rich treasure that He was ready to pour out.

III. Another thought which seems to me to be expressed in this wonderful exclamation of our Lord is, that their faithlessness bound Christ to earth, and kept Him there. As there is not anger, but only pain, so there is also, I think, not exactly impatience, but a desire to depart, coupled with the feeling that He cannot leave them till they have grown stronger in faith, and that feeling is increased by the experience of their utter helplessness and shameful discomfiture during His brief absence. They had shown that they were not fit to be trusted alone. He had been away for a day up in the mountain there, and though they did not build an altar to any golden calf, like their ancestors, when their leader was absent, still when He comes back He finds all things gone wrong because of the few hours of His absence. What would they do if He were to go away from them altogether? "How long must I be with you?" said the loving

Teacher, who is prepared ungrudgingly to give His slow scholar as much time as he needs to learn his lesson.

IV. Again, we here get a glimpse into the depth of Christ's patience and forbearance. This plaintive question sounds like a pledge that as long as they need forbearance they will get it, but at the same time a question of how long that is to be. It implies the inexhaustible riches and resources of His patient mercy.

A. MACLAREN, *Week Day Evening Addresses*, p. 54.

REFERENCES: ix. 19.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 261. ix. 22.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 182.

Chap. ix., ver. 23.—"Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

CHRIST'S "If" answered and more than answered the man's "if." The man had said, "if thou canst do anything"; Christ reversed it and showed where the real contingency lay. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." And why are all things possible to him that believeth? Because he that believeth takes hold of Christ and uses His omnipotence.

I. Observe first the expression. "If thou *canst* believe," not, "if thou *dost* believe." Every man who has not made himself lower than a man, and so lost the position of our common humanity —every man has some faith. And every man who uses the faith he has, will increase its power and acquire more. You are the arbiter of your own creed, and your faith is also the test of your own moral condition. And our Lord was not mocking the father of the lunatic child—He was not making a requirement of that which was an impossibility, but He was elevating his mind, and carrying on his own spiritual life, when He said to him "If thou canst believe."

II. The outside boundary line of the province of faith, properly so called, is promises. Faith is laying hold, I do not say of what God is, for God may be and is much which we cannot understand enough even to believe—but it is laying hold of what God has covenanted Himself to us—what God is to His people. The promises are what God is to His Church, therefore faith confines itself to promises.

III. The text does not say "All things are given to him that believeth," but "All things are possible to him that believeth." It may happen, for various causes, that a man may not, at a certain period, receive even what he believes and seeks. God may have some wise, secret reason for not giving it at that time.

The man himself, though, he has the faith, may yet have to learn how to use and express his faith better. There is no promise respecting the time, or the way; there is the promise, but not the how or the when. All that is asserted is this, that when a man has the faith of a mercy, he has then the possibility of that mercy. Then, all barriers have been removed, and he may have that mercy at any time, and be sure to have that mercy some time.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 1868, p. 85.

REFERENCES: ix. 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 474; vol. xxix., No. 1,744; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, pp. 222, 281; J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Christian Year*, vol. ii., p. 193.

Chap. ix., vers. 23, 24.

PRESENT Phases of Unbelief.

I. Unbelief may have its rise and find occasion in three directions—the external world, man, and the nature of Christianity itself. One meets constantly the words Agnosticism and Positivism, and these words indicate the channel in which unbelief at present flows.

II. The very principle of the Agnostic involves a contradiction. He declares that man cannot know that there is a God—that God, if He exists, cannot make Himself known. Is not this professing to know a very great deal? This is not agnostic—without knowledge; this is claiming to have an exhaustive knowledge both of man and God, claiming a knowledge, too, in plainest contradiction to human history and human consciousness.

III. One of the characteristics of the unbelief of the present time is its high ethical spirit and purpose. In this it stands wholly opposed to the atheism of former days, which often sought to efface moral distinctions. Our quarrel with this phase of unbelief is, that it ignores man, that it does not look at the facts of the soul, in comparison with which all others are fading pictures. It is fractional and exclusive. Christianity is wide and impartial. It believes that the true reason is the utterance of man's whole nature.

IV. The Positivist rejects agnosticism He is successful in showing that agnosticism as a religion fails in the three essential elements—belief, worship, conduct. But when he comes to exhibit his own substitute for Christianity, he creates a feeling of surprise, of bewilderment. It is collective humanity that he proposes to worship. While rejecting all abstractions and

theories, and professing to regard only fact and law, "law social, moral, mental as well as physical," he is guilty of worshipping the most entire, and at the same time the most incongruous abstraction. He forgets that men can only worship that which can respond.

V. Another phase of unbelief specially characteristic of our time, and by which it seeks to overthrow religion, is the exclusive claim to disinterestedness.

VI. Our age supplies in its spirit and tendency three antidotes to its own phase of unbelief. (1) The study of the comparative science of religions. The effect of this is to deepen on the mind the conviction that religion is an essential part of human nature, and the dominating part. (2) The strongly ethical character of much of the literature of the time and the deep interest taken in the discussion of ethical questions is on the side of religion. (3) The best poets are among the best friends of religion in our day.

J. LECKIE, *Sermons at Ibrox*, p. 362.

REFERENCES: ix. 23, 24.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 281; J. Natt, *Plain Sermons*, p. 166.

Chap. ix., ver. 24.—"And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

THE transfiguration marks, so it seems, a crisis in our blessed Lord's history. It was a great out-shining of the glory of God in the sacred Humanity, permitted alike for the strengthening of the Son for His bitter passion, and for the more confirmation of the staggering faith of the holy Apostles as they witnessed the descent of their Master low down into the valley of His unfathomable humiliation. Henceforth His eye seems ever to be fixed on the cross. Many people have seen Raphael's famous picture of the Transfiguration. It is a striking contrast and absolutely necessary if we would really grasp the meaning of the miracle. The lesson of the contrast is:

I. "Seek ye My face." Cultivate the presence of Jesus Christ; realise that any conversation, any pleasure, any companionship, any business where He cannot be called, tempts Him to leave the soul; that a life lived without Him must end in darkness and in shame. Realise on the other hand, that wherever our lot may be cast, in poverty, in sickness, in loneliness, it matters not where, it is well, so only in meekness we cling to Him.

II. As you think of our Lord descending from the height of glory to this scene of sadness and sorrow, see a picture of His love. This demoniac boy, what was he but a type of the sin-stricken world? These vain attempts alike of the Jewish Church and of the Apostles not yet gifted with the Holy Ghost, how it all tells us of the thousand efforts made, now by pious Jews, now by those outside the covenant of Promise, to heal the plague of a fallen world, yet was it all in vain. So He, the Eternal, left the Holy Mount, clad Himself in the robe of flesh, and all that He might expel from our souls the evil spirit who had robbed God of His creature, man.

III. See the power of faith: "All things are possible to him that believeth." The father cried, "If Thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." The reason why miracles are not wrought to-day is, not because Christ has failed in power, but because *we* have failed in faith, the faith as a grain of mustard seed is lacking.

IV. See the power of self purification. "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

T. BIRKETT DOVER, *The Ministry of Mercy*, p. 175.

IF these words express a real state of mind—and who that knows his own heart can doubt for a moment that they do?—it is evident that belief and unbelief can co-exist at the same time; that unbelief is not at once eradicated because we say "I believe;" that belief is not unreal, not hollow, because it is sadly lacerated, and sometimes as it would seem almost inter-penetrated, with the poison of unbelief.

I. When the father of the stricken child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief," He knew what he meant. He meant this: "Lord, I do believe that Thou canst heal my child. How it can be, I know not; but everything tells me that Thou canst aid me. I do believe, though I hardly know why. Give me clearer knowledge. Help my unbelief. But meanwhile heal my son. I know that Thou canst do that." We need healing. Do we know that we need it? If we do, the doctrine of the Trinity is not far from our hearts, however perplexing it may be to our intellects. If we do not know it, our Lord Himself, though He were again present on the earth, could not prove to us that He is one with the Father and the Comforter.

II. Men believed to be inspired have by all people been regarded with peculiar veneration. The veneration has often

been paid to an inspiration which certainly did not come from the spirit of good. But our temptation is to disbelieve inspiration altogether, as a present, operative reality; to regard men as left to themselves, as the authors of their own good and their own evil; to deny a Divine presence; to regard God as a Being historically past or indefinitely future; as One who did speak to the Jews, and will hereafter speak to us, but leaves us now to pass unassisted through a probation which is to fit us for knowing Him in a different state of existence. He who believes in a Holy Ghost sees mankind under a different aspect. They are either grieving or obeying that Divine Spirit. Their evil is rebellion. Their good is God's. It is possible to say in folly, "There is no God"—no Spirit. It is also possible to say and to feel, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." God revealed Himself gradually to the world. He reveals Himself gradually to us. We pray that His work may go on in our hearts; that no prejudice, or sin, or indolence, or insincerity of ours may thwart Him. We believe that the doctrine of three Persons in one God, so far from being an abysmal mystery which it may be right to accept but impossible to make practical, is the one thing which it is most needful for us all to know. "Lord, we believe; help Thou our unbelief."

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 61.

TAKE these words:

I. As the voice of one seeking salvation. Now, if one ask salvation for another, or for himself, Christ demands faith, and in demanding, helps faith to exist and act. "Lord I believe." How do I believe? It is the Lord who, by the secret power of His Holy Spirit, enables me to believe at all. And yet, what we are conscious of, when we first believe, is not of that Divine touch of the quickening Spirit, but of the action of our own souls, taking hold upon Him, according to His words, as our only and all-sufficient Helper and Healer, and putting our entire trust in Him. "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

II. As the voice of the Christian in some anguish of spirit. Grant that the first lessons of faith have been learned, and the elements of new life and hope have been planted in the soul. It is seldom that men understand the real use and value of faith, or the real strength and mischief of unbelief, until they have fallen into some distress, or wrestled with some great sorrow. Adversity or discouragement comes, and words will not support

us then. We are alone with a heavy grief, or involved in something that, of all things, we wanted to avoid and shrink from, or face to face with what we know not how to bear. We toss on the sea and the wind is contrary, and where is our faith? Ah! it is with a struggle then that we believe, and we quickly add, "Lord, help mine unbelief."

III. As the words of the believer in view of duty, or of some holy privilege. (1) Say of duty first. You have some lowly work to do for the Lord on whom you wait. There are trials about very lowly work. At times you have your temptations. Your motives become complicated because you have lost your simplicity of faith and purpose and your singleness of eye looking at your Master's hand and countenance. Then make haste to the Saviour and pray unto Him. "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." (2) It may be, you advance to some holy privilege of grace, say the Lord's table. Go with your faint heart, your feeble faith, and your emptiness and helplessness, to the fulness of Jesus Christ, and you will not fare worst at His table. And when you say, "Lord Jesus, I do believe," then add in a breath, "Help Thou mine unbelief."

IV. As the voice of the whole Church on earth anxious for the salvation of her children. She has a constant struggle to maintain the holy faith, and overcome the doubts and incredulities that are springing up within her pale. The mediæval missionary, the Reformer, the Puritan, and the Covenanter, had none of that dapper orthodoxy which now-a-days casts its measuring line over all. He fought his doubts and gathered strength, and while he had a faith that gave courage to his heart and gravity to his character and heroism to his life, on that very account he felt that he must judge himself rather than other men, and that he must cry for himself in the battle of life, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." I should have more hope for the cause of truth now if we saw the same type of brave and humble Christian character returning, of course with the additional charm of the culture of the present age.

D. FRASER, *Penny Pulpit* (New Series), No. 444.

THE Struggle and Victory of Faith.

We learn here: I. That faith and unbelief are often found in the same heart.

II. That whenever faith and unbelief meet in an earnest heart there will be war.

III. We can foretell how the war will go, by the side which a man's heart takes.

IV. The way to be sure of the victory of faith is to call in the help of Christ.

J. KER, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 1.

REFERENCES: ix. 24.—R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 229; G. C. Bell, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 17; M. Dix, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 195; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1,033; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 71; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 345; vol. vii., p. 165; vol. ix., p. 181; J. Martineau, *Endeavours after the Christian Life*, p. 343. ix. 29.—W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. ii., p. 83. ix. 30-41.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 202; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 272. ix. 33.—G. E. L. Cotton, *Sermons and Addresses in Marlborough College*, p. 19.

Chap. ix., vers. 33-7.

THE child in the midst.

Note I. That our Lord's lesson lay, not in the humanity, but in the childhood of the child. The disciples had been disputing who should be the greatest, and the Lord wanted to show them that such a dispute had nothing to do with the way things went in His kingdom. Therefore, as a specimen of His subjects, He took a child and set him before them. It was not, it could not, be in virtue of his humanity, it was in virtue of his childhood that this child was thus shown as representing a subject of the Kingdom. It was not to show the scope, but the nature of the Kingdom. He told them they could not enter into the Kingdom save by becoming little children—by humbling themselves, for the idea of ruling was excluded where childlikeness was the one essential quality. It was to be no more who should rule, but who should serve; no more who should look down on his fellows from the conquered heights of authority—even of sacred authority—but who should look up, honouring humanity and ministering unto it, so that humanity itself might be persuaded of its own honour as a temple of the living God.

II. This lesson led to the enunciation of a yet higher truth, upon which it was founded, and from which indeed it sprung. Nothing is required of man that is not first in God. It is because God is perfect that we are required to be perfect; and it is for the revelation of God to all the human souls, that they may be saved by knowing Him, and so becoming like Him, that this child is thus chosen, and set before them in the gospel. It is the recognition of the childhood as Divine, that will show

the disciple how vain is the strife after relative place or honour in the great Kingdom.

III. To receive a child in the name of God is to receive God Himself. How to receive Him? As alone He can be received—by knowing Him as He is. Here is the argument of highest import, founded upon the teaching of our Master in the utterance before us. God is represented in Jesus, for that God is like Jesus; Jesus is represented in the child, for that Jesus is like the child. Therefore God is represented in the child, for that He is like the child. God is child-like. In the true vision of this fact lies the receiving of God in the child.

G. MACDONALD, *Unspoken Sermons*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: ix. 33-7.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 200. ix. 33-50.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. xi., p. 79; A. Maclaren, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 37. ix. 35-7.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors of the Gospel*, p. 157. ix. 36.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, 2nd series, No. 11. ix. 36, 37.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Day*, p. 77. ix. 38.—H. P. Liddon, *University Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 165.

Chap. ix., vers. 38, 39.—"And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not, for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me."

PERSONS who choose their religion for themselves, or who wander about from one communion of Christians to another at their will, often urge upon us who wish to be disciples of the faith, which was once delivered to the saints, this passage of Scripture. They argue that as the Apostles were not allowed to forbid this stranger, neither may the Church forbid strange teachers and preachers; that all have a right to preach, whether they follow the Church or no, so that they do but preach in the name of Jesus, without any molestation.

I. Now I deny that the case in the text is at all parallel to that which it is brought to justify, as a few remarks will show. (1) First then, this man was not preaching, he was casting out devils. This is a great difference—he was doing a miracle. Man cannot overcome the devil, Christ alone overcomes him. If a man cast out a devil, he has power from Christ; and if he has power from Christ, he must have a commission from Christ; and who shall forbid one to whom God gives commission to do miracles, from doing them? That would be fighting against God. But, on the other hand, many a man may preach without

being sent from God, and having power from Him. (2) But it may be said, The effects of preaching are a miracle. I answer that though such preaching did work what looks like a miracle, this would not prove that it came from God; for the false prophets, against whom our Saviour warns us, are to do "signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect." (3) Even if sinners were converted under such an one's preaching, this would not show that he did the work, or at least, that he had more than a share in it. The miracle after all might belong to the Church, not to him.

II. It should be observed, that if our Saviour says, on this occasion, "He that is not against us is on our part"; yet elsewhere He says, "He that is not with Me is against Me." The truth is, while a system is making way against an existing state of things, help of any kind advances it; but when it is established, the same kind of professed help tells against it. Before the Gospel was received, those who did not oppose the Apostles actually aided them; when it was received, the very same parties interfered with them. Let us consider when it was that our Saviour spoke the words in the text. It was at a time when there was no Church, when He had not yet set up His Church; we have no warrant, therefore, in saying, that because men might work in Christ's name, without following the Apostles, before He had built up His Church, and had made them the foundations of it, therefore such persons may do so lawfully since.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 190.

REFERENCES: ix. 40.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. vii., p. 103. ix. 41.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 535; vol. vii., p. 275; *Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 395. ix. 42-50.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 231; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 207.

Chap. ix., vers. 43, 44.—**"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched," etc.**

THESE are words from the lips of Christ; what do they mean? They were evidently spoken in a very serious and solemn mood, and were evidently intended to represent a very serious and solemn reality.

I. Now we know what the popular opinion is, concerning the hell of which Christ speaks, and I must needs begin by repudiating it under the constraint, the irresistible constraint of the conviction, that it is diametrically opposed to all that He

has shown and told us of God; that it contravenes entirely the revelation which He has brought to us of the Father. What then is this hell, with its unquenchable fire, of which Christ warns us. To go into hell, was on His lips, as you know, simply to go into Gehenna, and Gehenna was the Syro-Chaldaic word for the Hebrew Gahinnom, "valley of Hinnom"—a narrow valley with steep rocky sides, running south-west of Jerusalem; but a ravine with a history. It would seem to have become "the common cesspool of the city, into which its sewage was conducted, to be carried off by the waters of the Kedron," as well as the spot where combustible refuse of various kinds was gathered to be burnt. It represented to the Jews as being "the lay-stall of Jerusalem's filth,"—the ultimate portion of corrupt souls.

II. Gehenna was the state of moral unwholesomeness, of corruption, to which they would invariably reduce themselves, who refused to give up what they felt to be perilous, or prejudicial to their interests, as moral creatures. . . . When Christ says, Better life with self-mortification than self-indulgence with Gehenna, Gehenna, on His tongue, must needs stand for corruption, since corruption is the antithesis of life, and the literal Gehenna, as we have seen, was emphatically the place of corruption. Yes, the hell by which Christ warns us to be loyal to the demands of faith, to the voice of the soul within us, is just the inward depravity which disloyalty and unfaithfulness in such directions are certain to breed; and what hell can be worse than that?

III. But the Lord Jesus goes on to speak of the fire of Gehenna, passing thus from the thought of the corruption induced by unworthy self-indulgence, to the thought of what such corruption shall be subject to. Gehenna, he says, is frequently lit up with fires; fires kindled for the consumption of the refuse collected there; and remember, that in the moral world of God, wherever there is corruption, *there* sooner or later, *fire* will surely come, to attack it remorselessly, until it shall be purged away. S. A. TIPPLE, *Echoes of Spoken Words*, p. 143.

REFERENCES: ix. 47, 48.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 216. ix. 50.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 28. x. 1-12.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 211. x. 1-27.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 251; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 257. x. 2-52.—*Ibid.* x. 13, 14.—*Sermons on the Catechism*, p. 230; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. iii., p. 241. x. 13-15.—J Aldis, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 280.

Chap. x., vers. 13-16.—"And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them," etc.

CHILDREN welcomed to Christ.

You will observe, that the attitude and the act were at one and the same moment, paternal and priestly. He took the children up in His arms as a father; while, as a high priest, "He put His hands upon them and blessed them." And so, we may say, is every act of Christ. There is a human affection and sympathy, a fondness as a man; and there is a grace, an actual grace imparted, by virtue of His divine and holy office.

Note: I. The danger of sin standing in the way of children coming to Christ. Is not much that calls itself "religious education" really an imbuing a child's mind with a dislike and dread of the whole subject? Look well to it, lest you be found with one hand to have brought your children to baptism, and with the other really to have frightened them away from that very Christ, with whom you think you have left them.

II. The duty of bringing children to Christ. It is an oft told tale, how the impressions made in childhood are sure to creep out in after-life. How the ship, which would ride well upon the waves, must have the ballast laid in before she is launched upon the deep waters, and how a useful manhood, and a happy old age, are almost always the sequence of a pious childhood.

III. The necessity laid upon us all, of ourselves becoming like little children. If it were only that we might influence children, we should cultivate a child-like spirit, for none can do good, especially to the young, but those who are very simple in their thoughts, and very lowly in their ways. But in what are we to become like a little child? In many things; but I will just mention one or two. (1) When those little children lay in Jesus' arms, His act came before any of their acts. Freely as He bestowed the grace, so freely the little children took it. This is just the way to get to the Kingdom. (2) The credulity of the child is the faith of the Christian. My Saviour, my Lord has said it. He has said it, and I will believe it; and I will ask no questions. (3) And a very little child is necessarily led. So we must be content to be borne and carried every step.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 271.

THE Children's Charter.

I. It throws the tender lovingkindness of Jesus into bold relief if we compare it with the unloving, inconsiderate behaviour of His disciples. For they rebuked the women, and even laid

their strong hands on the little ones who came running round Christ, and pushed them back. They seem, indeed, to have been quite unusually rude and rough in their bearing. For when we read that they rebuked the women, we are not to understand that they used dignified and polite language. What the word means is that they chid, that they scolded them, rating them for their forwardness and presumption in intruding themselves upon the Master's notice. The disciples only made a mistake such as we all make sometimes. It was love, rising to zeal, for their Lord which led them to push back the children, though it was not a zeal according to knowledge. They meant no harm, and yet they might have done great harm. They might not only have robbed you of your charter, and the women and children of the blessing they craved; they might also have deprived themselves and the Pharisees of the lesson they both so much needed to learn: viz., "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein."

II. Even the best men, then, even those who stand nearest Christ, sin against Him and provoke Him to anger if they treat children as though they did not belong to Him, and had no right to come to Him. And yet this is just what many good men are doing unto this day. But never mind them. Look to Christ; listen to what He says. He says that you children, and those who resemble you, are in His kingdom; and that, therefore, you may go to Him when you will, sure that He loves you, and that He will bless you.

S. Cox, *The Bird's Nest*, p. 83.

The passage which I have taken as a text has a meaning as regards the spiritual influence attaching to infant baptism, beyond that which the exhortation in the Baptismal Service seems to assign to it. If we find it necessary to admit that infants were benefited by being brought to Christ, and that every difficulty which belongs to infant baptism belongs in an equal degree to the case of the infants received and blessed by Christ, then we shall feel that it is far from incredible, rather that it is in the highest degree probable, that infants brought into Christ's spiritual presence in His ordinance do receive a real spiritual benefit thereby.

I. In the first place, then, did the children who were brought to Christ receive any benefit? It is clear that the parents thought they would; and when we read that "He took them

up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them," I should deem it impiety to suppose that they received no benefit. Let us admit then, that through the faith of their parents or friends these children received an advantage which other children, not blessed by Christ, did not receive; so much, I think, it is easy to grant, but when we come to inquire what this advantage was, the answer is not so easy.

II. Was it, for instance, a certainty of salvation that these infants received? Surely not; it would be impiety to imagine it even for a moment. Adam and Eve were blessed by God, and pronounced very good; yet Adam and Eve fell: and Judas must, I suppose, have often received the blessing of his Master, although he turned out a traitor. Again, was it security from temptation? Surely not; in this world of trial and temptation it has never been granted to any to have exemption; on the other hand, those have usually been the best and holiest, who have been most subject to temptations.

III. The blessing was, after all, a blessing without price, one which these children doubtless felt themselves in after years that they would not exchange for the wealth of worlds. And if this be so, then we come to this important result, that it is possible to predicate of children that they have received a great spiritual benefit, a benefit which no human words can exaggerate, and yet not to assert anything absurd or anything dangerous. Now let us see how this bears upon the Sacrament of Baptism; in this case we have children presented to Christ, and if the sacrament be of His own appointment, and the children come to it by His own invitation, then it seems quite necessary to believe that they receive a blessing from the Lord, a blessing which we need not fear to exaggerate by any such language as we can frame.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 116.

REFERENCES: x. 13-16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 581; vol. xxxii., No. 1,925; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 216; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 50; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 344; J. Sherman, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 325. x. 14.—C. Girdlestone, *Twenty Parochial Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 187; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 130; J. Aldis, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 154; W. C. E. Newbolt, *Counsels of Faith and Practice*, p. 97.

Chap. x., ver. 15.

THE Child-like Mind.

I. The child-like temper is nowise inconsistent with true

manliness—manliness both of the intellect and of the will and feelings. Well-meaning persons sometimes fall into the mistake of contrasting the heroic with the Christian character, as if the highest heroism were not that which is distinctly Christian. The difference between mere heathen or worldly manliness and the manliness of the Christian is, that the first is entirely self-dependent, while the other ever humbly depends on God. The Christian martyr, as much as the hero of this world, has overcome the natural weakness which would make us always to be timidly looking out for support from our fellow-men; he has learned, in one sense, to stand alone; but then, in another sense, he knows that he is not alone. The humility of the child-like character, given by the Holy Spirit of God to Christians, makes them more, instead of less, brave in all dangers.

II. Again, the child-like temper of the Christian has nothing in it of the folly of childhood. As a general statement every one assents to this. No one maintains directly that a humble and simple mind, wrought in us by the Spirit of God, will attach us to trivial matters, or incapacitate us for feeling an interest in all events of really deep moment. Sometimes well-meaning men mistake in this—teaching that a humble, simple-minded Christian takes no interest in public matters. What ought to be said is, that his interest in these will be purified, and that he will estimate them at their real value.

III. Again, it is a mistake to suppose that the child-like mind does not appreciate the great worth of human learning. Human learning, it is true, is but foolishness compared with the wisdom of the all-knowing God. But to cultivate our intellects is a duty which He has laid upon us. Indeed, there is nothing more characteristic of the simplicity of the child, than its desire to acquire knowledge; the simple child is always learning; only observe, that he learns the more because he is so fully aware of his own ignorance. And thus the Christian child-like temper in mature years will be quite opposed to that conceit of knowledge which genders pride.

IV. Our religion is not to be childish because Christians must be child-like. The true Christian is ever growing in the knowledge and love of God in Christ. The very test to which we are required to bring the reality of our Christianity is this: whether we be growing—whether we be becoming more able to restrain ourselves, more devout, more able to realise the

presence of Christ and hold communion with Him, as years advance.

A. C. TAIT, *Lessons for School Life*, p. 283.

REFERENCES: x. 15.—B. Jowett, *Church Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 193; *Homilist*, vol. v., p. 198.

Chap. x., vers. 15, 16.—"Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them."

I. THE Holy Spirit, in this well-known passage of St. Mark's Gospel, offers to the minds of serious persons a very affecting instance of the Divine love and condescension. We are here taught, among other things, that our gracious Master regards with approbation any attempts, made in faith and humility, to bring the young ones of His flock to the privileges and knowledge of His Gospel. He wishes children to be brought to Him from their earliest infancy. As they grow older, He would have them taught to worship the God of their fathers, not as fulfilling a questionable or irksome obligation, but with a perfect heart and with a willing mind.

II. When in former days, in the spirit of true devotion, the Jewish mothers brought their children to the holy Jesus, that He might lay His hands on their heads and bless them, some who were present were greatly offended at this, which they at once condemned as a vain, idle, and useless superstition. But the Lord seeth not as man seeth. What man pronounces to be weakness and folly, or even worse, the Lord Jesus Christ took even pains to show His approbation of. What man, in the confidence of carnal wisdom, pronounces to be mere superstition and formality; that, when practised by a heart filled with penitence, lowliness and obedience, and a mere desire to do only what God commands, and to love only what He promises,—that, however meanly thought of in this miserable world, He, the Great Almighty Father will, we doubt not, pour down His choicest blessings on. To seek God in the way of His ordinances, and not in ways of our own choosing, must always be the safest course. To do this can never be dangerous; to do other than this, can never be safe.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. x., p. 275.

REFERENCE: x. 16.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 149.

Chap. x., vers. 17, 18.

SUPREMACY of Goodness.

I. Consider the thought suggested by our Lord's remarkable address in the text. To the courteous and reverential words of the inquirer, His rejoinder sounds at once harsh and paradoxical. "Good Master"—"Why callest thou Me good?" But it is only at first sight that there is anything difficult or surprising in the answer, "Why callest thou Me good?" We need not think of an impossible disclaimer of goodness in Himself, of an inconceivable denial of goodness, in some sense and measure, to men. Our Lord saw before Him one who had lightly and with a thin share of thought and self-knowledge asked his momentous question, and whose good intentions far outran his grasp of its meaning, and his power to face the answer. Our Lord did what we have often seen done. "Good Master,—do you know what you are speaking about? have you thought of the meaning of your words? Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but one, that is God. You, who use the word so freely, you are wasting, as a mere title of courtesy, what is the highest attribute of God." The answer was addressed to two great deficiencies in the inquirer's character and mind. (1) His standard and level of goodness was too low and too conventional—of what was good in himself, of the good to be aimed at, of the distance at which he stood from the fountain and model of goodness. And (2) his sluggishness of will and effort was unequal to the task on which he had entered, and the race which he professed to be running; and his mind and conscience had to be disturbed and alarmed by presenting before it the call that a real estimate and sense of what goodness means, would make upon it. To be what he proposed to be, to be what he asked about, to have that which he supposed he saw in our Lord, was nothing less than to aim at being perfect, as the Father in heaven is perfect.

II. But the Lord's words have a more general interest, and it lies, I suppose in this: that they are one of the numberless ways in which he enforced the same great lesson, of the supreme value in His eyes, of goodness, above everything else that man can aim at, or know, or have; above every other principle or endowment of our human nature. We see in these words the characteristic of his teaching, the broad, unqualified, unvarying assumption, that the measure and standard

of everything in man's life and actions is that goodness by which, at however great a distance, he approaches the moral nature, his God and Father in heaven. And as with our Lord's own teaching, so with those great ideas and ruling principles which He implanted in the society which He set up to carry on His work in the world, and which that society was to develop and apply. As far as they relate to the estimate and conduct of human life, they revolve, so to say, about the idea of goodness, of sanctity. The idea of goodness had in Christianity a clear, sharp, decisive primacy, which it never had in any other system, and which surprised and perplexed the world. It had a very strongly marked pattern and standard, the life and mind and self-sacrificing love of the Son of God.

III. "Why callest thou Me good?" is the strange word by which our Lord awakens our attention to what we are too ready to think a truism. He who—amid all that He was not of what men admire in this world—was the unique and unapproachable example of goodness, speaks to us in it still, amid the absorbing interests of our busy and eager times. Our safeguard in the dazzling and amazing world of discovery in which we live is loyalty to goodness, loyalty to its supreme claims, loyalty to its Lord. Never let us allow ourselves in the thought that being clever and having knowledge makes up for not caring to be good. And let us remember, too, that the pursuit of goodness, the building up of character and life in that goodness which our Master meant, is as hard a thing as true intellectual discipline. It is as much a thing of patience and time. It is as much a thing which costs trouble and tries resolution. If goodness were merely the qualities which men are born with, brilliant and lovely, the qualities which each man without trouble and with pleasure exercises—gentleness, love of truth, courage—goodness would not be a thing which rises, by mistakes and falls and painful self-correction, to whatever may be its degree of attainment. But if it be the direction of the will to whatever we are sure is right and good, whether congenial or not, whether we like it or no, the student who means to be a master of knowledge may as well take his task easy, as the servant and soldier of the Crucified, in following his Master.

R. W. CHURCH, *Human Life and its Conditions*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: x. 17.—*Expository Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 57; J. H. Thom, *Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ*, p. 164. x. 17-22.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 558. x. 17-25.—*Good*

Words, vol. i., p. 92. x. 17-27.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 124. x. 17-31.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 220. x. 20-22.—J. Martineau, *Endeavours after the Christian Life*, p. 265.

Chap. x., ver. 21.—"One thing thou lackest."

THE text teaches:

I. How important one thing may be. It not unfrequently happens that the want of one thing vitiates and makes void the presence of all things else. Lacking its main-spring—which is but one thing—a watch with its jewels, wheels, pinions and beautiful mechanism, the finest watch that was ever made, is of no more use than a dead stone. A ship may be built of the stoutest oak, and manned by the ablest officers and stoutest crew, but I sail not in her if she lacks one thing, that trembling needle which a child might mistake for a toy, but on which, insignificant as it seems, the safety of all depends—lacking that one thing the ship shall be their coffin, and the deep sea their grave. It is thus with true piety, living faith—that one thing wanting, the greatest works, the costliest sacrifices and the purest life, are of no value in the sight of God, are null and void.

II. That we may be amiable without being truly religious. It is sad to find the grace of God associated in some people with an unkindly, uncharitable, sour, severe, stern, sullen temper. It should not be so. It is a most incongruous conjunction. On the other hand, let it not be forgotten that natural graces have adorned many who were entire strangers to the grace of God. They are not to be confounded with one another; nor is it to be imagined that natural graces ever can compensate for the grace that is to salvation. There may be much that is beautiful in us, without anything holy—presenting circumstances more or less analogous to those in nature. Uncultivated wilds have beautiful flowers, and our unsanctified nature has beautiful specimens of humanity.

III. There may be much moral correctness without true religion. Much of our morality—of that unblemished character and decent life in which many trust, who say to some poor guilty thing, "Stand aside, I am holier than thou," and plume themselves on this, that they have not sinned as others have done—is due, not to their superior virtue, but more favourable circumstances. Therefore let us be clothed with humility, and ever praying, "Lead us not into temptation"; "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

IV. We may feel some interest and anxiety about good things without true religion. I look upon this as one of the most alarming cases in the sacred record. It calls on the best of men to try the foundations on which their hopes are resting. If this man did not get to heaven, how are they to get there? If the righteous, the really righteous, those who have been washed in the blood of the Son, and sanctified by the Spirit of God, are scarcely saved, where shall the wicked and the ungodly appear? If a man, clinging to the world, will stay in it, he shall go down with it, sink with the sinking ship. But accept the offer Christ makes of peace by the blood of His Cross, and you are saved—saved in spite of your riches as well as of your sins.

T. GUTHRIE, *Family Treasury*, July, 1861.

Chap. x., ver. 21.—"Come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

THE Power of Life.

Few can have lived long without feeling that solemn blank which is left at times by one whom, perchance, they little thought filled so large a space, in so powerful a way, by his or her great goodness; what a great emptiness there can be when the presence is no more—the presence which, when it is gone, seems to have been everywhere about us in its silent strength. So living is the power of life.

I. And this is true of Christ's life. It is the truth of truths, whether we speak of His life as narrated in the Gospels, or of His life as it may be seen working in the world now. Jesus Christ came with nothing but His life into the world. He came into the midst of the greatest empire that the earth had ever known, into the midst of its force, its armies, its wealth, its learning, its splendour, and brought with Him nothing, nothing but His life. And He left behind Him as a man nothing but the record of that life, written by others, and as God His Holy Spirit working in the world. Jesus Christ brought His own life as His only power, and we are to follow Him. Life alone deals with life. Life alone unlocks the secrets of life.

II. Everywhere Jesus made His own life go in amongst the living men, walking on crowded highways, living in public, in the midst of the people, with multitudes pressing on Him, sought out by publicans and sinners, known in cottages and poor men's homes. There is nothing second-hand in Christ's work. He gave Himself, He Himself and His own life act are all in all. The Incarnation itself is nothing else but

this—Immanuel, God with us. Christ on earth is nothing else but a continual putting of Divine life into human life. To follow Christ then in any true sense must be the doing this, whatever else it may be. No man follows Christ who leads a separate life. No worker from above, no giver of gifts from above, no sender down of bounty follows Christ. Mind, power, rank, writing, however freely showered down, are mere machine-work, dead, and not the following of Christ, not life moving amongst the living, learning to feel with them and being felt by them as one who can feel, because one of themselves. Christ moved amongst men in this way, life to life, and none follow Him who do not do so likewise.

E. THRING, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 137.

Chap. x., vers. 21.

THE dawn of manhood.

I. The facts which form the historical setting of the text are, the birth of hope and the guarantee of a large expectation of success, since they prove that Jesus has a kind and throbbing interest in, and a quick enduring sympathy with, men in the dawning of their manhood. "Jesus, looking upon the young man, *loved* him." That graphic touch of the artist biographer is a revelation. Jesus loves this young man. It was likely that He should. (1) He Himself is young; in the very fulness and freshness of His force, rejoicing in the unimpaired vigour of His life. Young souls are always social, averse to solitude, fresh in their sympathies, and intense in their zest of life. Christ and young manhood are as magnet and steel. They come together like drops of water that touch and hasten to coalesce. (2) Again, a common conflict knits heart to heart, quickens mutual interest and fosters brotherhood amongst the young. Our Master was in all points tempted as young men are. (3) His purpose and methods, too, fed His interest in, and increased His regard for young men. Jesus Christ came to create a new world, and therefore, as soon as He had given Himself to His transcendent task in that baptismal act in the river Jordan, He drew young men to Him by the magnetism of His own nature and sympathies, made them the recipients of His spirit, the exponents of His thoughts, and the messengers of His redeeming Gospel to the world.

II. Jesus demonstrates the old-world fact that a manhood, self-centred and self-contented, is a poor, withered, shrunken, and miserable thing. It is this patent fact that imparts such

pungency to the direction Christ gives to this wealthy young ruler.

III. The Lord Jesus reveals the fact that the one infallible requisite for making the right start for a true manhood is the definite and thorough acceptance of the one perfect ideal of the manly life. "One thing thou lackest." What is the one lacking thing is revealed in the words, "follow Me." The supreme need of the soul is the Christ of God.

J. CLIFFORD, *The Dawn of Manhood*, p. 1.

THIS young man presented some of the best and some of the worst aspects of human nature; he may be regarded, therefore, as a representative man. (1) He displayed a degree of moral earnestness; (2) he employed the language of veneration; (3) he was well-instructed in Biblical ethics; (4) he was inordinately attached to worldly possessions. Christ's conduct in the case showed, (1) that He compels men to look at the logical consequences of their own admissions. (2) That personal regard may be entertained where full moral approbation cannot be expressed. Looked at as a whole the text shows:—

I. The necessary limitations of the most careful religious training. The young man was no barbarian; the voices of the lawgivers and the prophets had resounded in his hearing, and he was familiar with the harp of the holy minstrels who had turned duty and sorrow, victory and defeat, into music; with practical theology, as pronounced in statutes and commandments, he was perfectly familiar, and even to practical religion in the life he declared himself no stranger. "All these have I observed from my youth." There may be the most careful training of the memory and most jealous watchfulness over the conduct among men, and yet the heart may not be the temple of God.

II. That the final attainment of education is the conquest of the heart. The young man knew enough; he was not perishing for lack of knowledge; light shone upon his intelligence; but his affections were self-enclosed and self-encoiled. There was one cross he could not lift, one surrender he could not make. Only one, but that was all. The conditions which Christ thus imposed show: (1) that Christ-following involves self-abnegation. Men cannot have a little of Christ and a little of self—in other words, true men cannot combine public profession and private self-gratification. (2) That Christ-following must be the expression of the soul's supreme love. Men are not permitted

to make a mere convenience of Christ. The young man loved his possessions more than Christ's word. There are men who are prepared to observe any number of commandments provided they can also hoard wealth and indulge passion. (3) That Christ-following means self-giving. Christ was the Giver, and men are like Him in proportion as they give. Giving is not yet understood as a test of discipleship. Giving is understood as a patronage, but not as a self-sacrifice.

III. That lack of one thing may be lack of everything. Conduct may be regulated in two ways: (1) by the brain; (2) by the heart. As with a watch so with the life. The face of the watch may be made to represent the truth by simply altering the hands, or it may be corrected by touching the interior works. So it is with human life: many seek to correct it by the outside; they seek for models, they inquire for footprints; but they neglect the life and spring within, and consequently never get beyond the affectation and artificialism, or the stiffness of Pharisaic conceit. These reflections may serve to show the tremendous danger of the fallacy, that if a man is right in the main he will be admitted into heaven.

IV. That the sincerity of men must be tested according to their peculiar circumstances. The young man had great possessions; consequently the test had relation to the worldliness of his spirit. What is a test to one man may be no test to another; hence the difficulty of one man appreciating the "cross" of another, and expressing intelligent sympathy. No other test would have met the peculiarity of this young man's case; he might have fasted long and prayed much, or even given liberally to the poor, but to sell all that he had was a test that shook his soul. The personal cross must be determined by the personal constitution. To one man it is no cross whatever to address a thousand hearers, yet to that very man it may be a heavy cross to speak a word for Christ to *one* individual. He is not, then, taking up a cross in addressing a multitude; his cross lies in another direction, and Christ points him to it.

PARKER, *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. i., p. 181.

REFERENCES: x. 21.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Septuagesima to Ash Wednesday*, pp. 293, 303; E. Thring, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 137; H. Burrows, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 353; *Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 333; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 54; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 341; *New Manual of Sunday School Addresses*, p. 181; J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 10th series, p. 69.

Chap. x., vers. 21, 22.

ONE thing thou lackest.

I. This young man, immortalised in the everlasting word, was not a phenomenon, he was a type. We see him so distinctly in his own question, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Yes, here is enquiry,—anxiety therefore, desire to be right, admission that there may be a higher height, a loftier attainment, than the life has yet reached; respect too, and reverence for one who is neither priest nor Rabbi nor ruler, who has neither rank, nor office, nor philosophy, nor oratory, but only the two things, sincerity and sanctity, to recommend him. This there is in the young man, and it brings him where all are welcome who would know and do; brings him running, brings him worshipping, and sets him face to face with Jesus Christ. Besides the spirit of enquiry and the spirit of reverence, there was a third thing in that character; a memory of morality, a habit of virtue. At the very moment that he is asking, What shall I do? his heart is saying within him, What lack I yet? He thinks, perhaps, when he asks that question, of some little finishing stroke, some last ornament and embellishment of perfectness, which may cost him an effort, but which at least need not undo nor unmake anything.

II. When Christ says to this moral young man, "Yet lackest thou one thing," we understand Him to say, "And that one thing is needful." He who puts it away from him, as either unnecessary for him or unattainable, counts himself unworthy of everlasting life. That which was lacking in the young man was, in one word, devotion; not devotion in the sense of devoutness, but devotion in the sense of self-surrender. The love of Christ stops not with gilding or refurbishing men, it sets open eternity. One thing thou lackest—thy soul must be athirst till she has it—union with the alone good One, the having Him in thee, the being at one with Him now and world without end. To have this thou must part with all else: in act, if Christ bids thee; in will, at all events, because Christ calls thee. The young ruler went away sorrowful. The love of Jesus was wasted upon him for this time, and the Gospels which tell of the going tell of no return. The moral, at all events, is thus written. It is not the second chance, it is not the late hope, it is not the last first, which is here recorded for our learning; it is the peril of refusing Christ's call, of saying to

Him, "I will not," when He bids us follow, of preferring earth when He offers heaven.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *University Sermons*, p. 354.

I. THE one thing which Christ sees wanting in so many of us is expressed clearly in the latter part of His words to the young man in the Gospel. He tells us, "Come, take up the cross, and follow Me." The words are figurative, we see, when He says, Take up the cross, and we may ask what the figure means. But we know that in the Latin language, the term *crux* or cross had been long used to express generally any great pain or evil; and the words *crucio* and *cruciatus* derived from it are yet used only generally; they do not express literally the pain or suffering of crucifixion, but pain and torment simply. And this manner of speaking has come into use, because the Romans used the punishment of crucifixion commonly, not only towards slaves, but towards criminals generally of the subject nations, unless they were persons of high condition. So that when our Lord tells the young man to take up his cross, it means exactly, "Bear thy pain or thy suffering, whatever it may be, and follow Me."

II. Christ calls us to take up our cross and follow Him. We were following Him, not taking up our cross; we were following Him where to follow Him was easy, and it is many times very easy. Do not go away grieving, when you hear Christ's call, because you are young, and faithful steady service of Christ will cost you many a sacrifice. Turn not from Him, but to Him much rather, with earnest prayer that He who bore His most painful cross for you, will enable you to bear your light one for His love; that He will help you daily, as your trial will come daily; that His strength may be made perfect in your weakness. And then, though the thing be harder than that a camel should pass through a needle's eye, yet it shall be done. The young, with all their carelessness, with all their difficulties from without as well as from within, shall enter into the kingdom of God; for so some have entered, and so shall some enter again, and so may all enter who do not turn away from the cross, but ask Christ's grace to help them to bear it.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 246.

REFERENCES: x. 21, 22.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 50; R. Duckworth, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 168. x. 23—G. Huntington, *Sermons for Holy Seasons*, 1st series, p. 237.

Chap. x., vers. 23-27.—"And Jesus looked round about and saith unto His disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God," etc.

THE Perils of Wealth.

I. Note the hardness of Christian self-denial to the rich. Self-denial lies at the foundation of the Christian character. The influence of great possessions unfits men for any self-denial whatever. Few can resist the temptation of wealth to luxurious habits, modes of life that become more and more exacting. Pleasure is a tyrannous master; indolence is begotten of easy circumstances; reflection languishes while desire is nursed. It is so easy, too, to purchase Christian labour: "We will give and others will work;" thus many men seek relief from the call of Christian duty. This is the reason why many a man trained up in a godly home, and familiar with Christ's teaching, is yet not one of Christ's followers. He knows the Christian life to be a self-denying life, and he has wholly unfitted himself for self-denial; sadly, drearily, hopelessly he turns away. He cannot follow Christ; he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

II. Self-knowledge, again, is especially hard to the rich. The question of the disciples, "Who then can be saved?" expresses the common wonder. The glamour of wealth is upon us all, and we cannot see eternal truth. So easily do we flatter ourselves that where there is no uncomeliness of manners the heart must be right; and the rich are surrounded by flatterers. A man may go through life never knowing what is in him, if all his desires are gratified, and every one about him echoes his fond self-complacency. "Who then can be saved?" Well may the disciples wonder. Christ's latter words have only enlarged the circle of those who find it hard to enter the kingdom of God. Trust in riches is not confined to the rich. "If only I had a little more," say one and another, say almost all, "If I had a little more, what a different man I should be. My piety would so gain if I were delivered from my cares, I could serve God so fully if I had but a competency." It is the common feeling, the almost universal search. Since all are seeking to be wealthy, since all are showing their trust in riches, who then can be saved? Men are seeking possessions as if these could ensure everything; as if possessions were the highest end of life. And Christ looks round with tender, awful eyes

and says, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God."

A. MACKENNAL, *The Life of Christian Consecration*, p. 212.

REFERENCES: x. 24.—G. Macdonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 26. x. 26.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 129; G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines*, p. 302. x. 28-30.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 262.

Chap. x., vers. 29, 30.

I. A REFLECTION upon the terrible danger of riches is the first moral of this incident. The disciples, indeed, more experienced some of them in the opposite perils of poverty, with its mean, foils and down-dragging cares and ready envyings, exclaim in astonishment, "Who then can be saved?" If the rich, with their tranquil days and easy fortunes, with every facility for the two virtues of honesty and of thankfulness, can hardly enter God's kingdom, how much less, surely, they whose whole life is trial—trial of patience, trial of rectitude, trial of faith. Thus it is that each rank and each age and each character regards its own as the very chief of all difficulties and all hindrances, thinks any other class or condition better off for salvation, and asks in despondency, if not in recrimination, If that other, that opposite, can scarcely be saved, how can I?

II. But there was one disciple who, in those days of his ignorance and self-reliance, was ever ready to compare himself advantageously with other men, and who saw, in the example of this young ruler going away sorrowful, an opportunity of vaunting the opposite conduct of those who, like himself, had counted all things loss for Christ. "Peter began to say unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee." Our Lord begins His reply to this boast by a warm and generous recognition of the greatness and blessedness of their self-sacrifice. There is no man who has done what he has done, who shall not here and hereafter have his reward. "Now in this time a hundredfold—in the world to come eternal life." We have here then, before us, as the principal subject, a magnificent view of the compensation of discipleship. Work done for Jesus Christ—done in sincerity, done in simplicity, done in love—shall not lack its reward. "A hundredfold now in this life, and in the world to come"—who shall speak it?

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Oxford Undergraduates' Journal*, Nov. 1st, 1877.

An Hundredfold now in this time. We have here, as the principal subject, a magnificent view of the compensations of discipleship.

I. Some have talked slightingly of the sacrifices made by Peter and his companions. They are supposed to have had little to give up. A crazy boat or two, a few tattered nets—that was their all. On the other hand, it does not appear that, at the time of this occurrence, their abandonment of home or employment was either final or absolute. After the resurrection the disciples are found in Galilee, resuming, at least occasionally, their old occupations. Nevertheless, they rightly regarded the call to follow Jesus as a call to give up everything for it. Never, again, would they be their own for a single hour. It was a true instinct which made Peter combine, in consecutive clauses and as equivalent phrases, the "left all," and the "followed Thee." An entire detachment from all that had made and been the old life was the very condition and meaning of the new.

II. This is the discipleship. Now for its compensations our Lord divides them. There is a compensation in the present, "now in this time." The nature of it is remarkable, "He shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands." The very language shows the promise figurative. We have read it, perhaps, as quite vague—"Shall receive something instead, something which shall reconcile him to the loss of all these." An inward peace, suppose—a sense of God reconciled—an appreciation of the littleness of things temporal—a growing, deepening apprehension of things invisible and eternal. Is there not something besides—something more precise and more peculiar—in this promise? Brothers, sisters, mothers, children—an hundredfold each and all of these, now, in this time—no mere equivalent, in the dim shadowy future, for the sacrifice of them here. There is a family—no man can number it—in earth and heaven, of which a man becomes a member when he becomes a Christian. God is its Father, Christ is its Head; holy angels are its elder brothers; saints, martyrs and apostles, all good men, dead or living, are its intimates and its kinsfolk; earth is its compass, heaven is its home; and whosoever believes in Christ, whosoever has the Holy Spirit in him, enters at once upon the affections and the sympathies of all these; extend, expand this kinsmanship through all time and all space, and you will see why Jesus Christ should say that the man who

gives up, or is willing to give up, the natural wins a hundredfold in the spiritual.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *University Sermons*, p. 371.

REFERENCES: x. 29, 30.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. i., p. 321; *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ii., p. 245. x. 30.—*Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 256.

Chap. x., ver. 31.—"But many that are first shall be last, and the last first."

THE Great Refusal.

I. The gracious Lord loved the young man, but was not met with trustful, entire response. Why did He love him? Because He saw him as he was—pure, enthusiastic, unspoiled, though unproved. It is a false and forlorn view to take of man, that there is nothing beautiful in him before he becomes saintly. The very attractiveness of an unredeemed soul makes us the more keenly desirous to redeem it. God may love a man whom He cannot yet trust; He may love a man who does not yet truly know, and cannot yet deeply love, Himself.

II. This rich young ruler was no selfish, corrupt worldling. He sought to have, perhaps to merit, eternal life. If we cannot merit heaven we cannot have heaven without merit. The youth would like to do something gloriously good, which he might wear as a rose at his breast, or carry as a heavenly decoration granted to him, an honourable courtier of the King of kings. He knew not that he lacked more than he had to give. He lacked the giving heart. He sincerely sought to be good; he admired, he revered goodness; but he thought to be good in a brilliant, easy manner. He had not strength to be good at the proposed cost.

III. Was he, therefore, excluded from the kingdom of heaven? It is sufficient to say that he was unable to follow Christ fully. Goodness has work to do, quite necessary, for which he was quite incompetent. But God does not reject what we *can* do because of what we cannot. Only, in the gradations of the spiritual realm, they who have borne the most, and been the bravest, will hold the highest places.

IV. As the test may not come to us, being rulers and being rich, so neither may it come in one hour, but may rather be applied through many a weary day. "Wilt thou be perfect?" is the question put to us. Having been invited by thy God, by His word that speaketh day by day, by thine own soul that has listened with delighted awe, to give thyself wholly to what will cost thee friends, and fame, and ease, and gain thee only

an honoured grave and a heavenly home—hast thou refused "Him that speaketh"? It is the Great Refusal.

T. T. LYNCH, *Sermons for my Curates*, p. 175.

Chap. x., ver. 32.—"And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid."

CHRIST on the Road to the Cross.

We learn from John's Gospel that the resurrection of Lazarus precipitated the determination of the Jewish authorities to put Christ to death; and that immediately thereafter there was held the council, at which, by the advice of Caiaphas, the formal decision was come to. Thereupon our Lord withdrew himself into the wilderness which stretches south and east of Jerusalem, and remained there for an unknown period, preparing Himself for the cross. Then, full of calm resolve, He came forth to die. This is the crisis in our Lord's history to which my text refers. The picture has not attracted the attention that it deserves. I think, if we ponder it with sympathetic imagination helping us, we may get from it some very great lessons and glimpses of our Lord's inmost heart in the prospect of His cross.

I. We have here what, for the want of a better name, I would call the heroic Christ. I use the word to express simply strength of will brought to bear in the resistance of antagonism; and although that be a side of the Lord's character which is not often made prominent, it is there and ought to have its due importance. We speak of Him, and delight to think of Him, as the embodiment of all loving, gracious, gentle virtues, but Jesus Christ as the ideal man unites in Himself what men are in the habit, somewhat superciliously, of calling the masculine virtues, as well as those which they somewhat contemptuously designate the feminine. We are to look to Jesus Christ as presenting before us the very type of all which which men call heroism, in the sense of an iron will, incapable of deflection by any antagonism, and which coerces the whole nature to obedience to its behests. Christ is the pattern of heroic endurance, and reads to us the lesson, *resist* and *persist*, whatever stands between us and our goal,

II. We see here not only the heroic, but what I may call the self-sacrificing Christ. We have not only to consider the fixed will which this incident reveals, but to remember the

purpose on which it was fixed, and that He was hastening to His cross. The very fact of our Lord's going back to Jerusalem with that decree of the Sanhedrim still in force was tantamount to His surrender of Himself to death. He recognised that now that *hour* of which He spoke so much had come, and of His own loving will offered Himself as our Sacrifice.

III. This incident gives us a glimpse of what I may call the shrinking Christ. Do we not see here a trace of something that we all know? May not part of the reason for Christ's haste have been that desire which we all have, when some inevitable grief or pain lies before us, to get it over soon and to abbreviate the moments that lie between us and it. Was there not something of that feeling in our Lord's sensitive nature when He said, for instance, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished"? And may we not see in that swift advance in front of the lagging disciples, some trace of the same feeling which we recognise to be so truly human? Christ did shrink from His cross. There was shrinking which was instinctive and human, but it never disturbed the fixed purpose to die. It had so much power over Him as to make Him march a little faster to the cross, but it never made Him turn from it. And so He stands before us the Conqueror in a real conflict, as having yielded Himself up by a real surrender, as overcoming a real difficulty, "for the joy that was set before Him, having endured the cross, despising the shame."

IV. So, lastly, I would see here the lonely Christ. In front of His followers, absorbed in the thought of what was drawing so near, gathering together His powers in order to be ready for the struggle, with His heart full of the love and the pity which impelled Him, He is surrounded as with a cloud which shuts Him out of their sight as afterwards the cloud of glory received Him. There never was such a lonely man in the world as Jesus Christ. Never one that carried so deep in His heart so great a purpose and so great a love which nobody cared a rush about. And those that were nearest Him and loved Him best, loved Him so blunderingly and so blindly that their love must have been often quite as much of a pain as of a joy. And all this solitude, the solitude of unappreciated aims, and unshared purposes, and misunderstood sorrow during life, and the solitude of death with all its elements ineffable of atonement, all this solitude was borne

that no human soul, living or dying, might ever be lonely any more. "Lo I," whom you all left alone, "am with you," who left Me alone, "even till the end of the world."

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, Nov. 11th, 1886.

I. THERE was something in the aspect of Christ, in the emanation of His spirit, which struck His disciples with a great awe. He had not yet spoken to them, but they felt what He had to say. But they were less than ever able to leave Him. Such awe was a magnetic spell which kept them within His circle. As they followed Him they were afraid, but if they forsook Him they were dead. "Lord, to whom shall we go but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Awful as the words sometimes seem, fearful as is the vision they open, let us hear them, let us enter into life by them. To turn from them is to enter into death—the death which is eternal.

II. There are moments when we are amazed as we listen to Jesus, and as we follow we are afraid. I think that it is with us in our Christian lives much as it was with Christ; there are great broad tracts of serenity and sunlight, crossed by shadows of awe and dread. Remember, the life of Jesus Christ must have presented the reverse of a gloomy or repellant aspect. The Shepherd is His chosen character. "I am the Good Shepherd"—uttered perhaps the deepest thought of His heart as to His relations to mankind. His words, His work, the spirit He breathed, were sweet and fresh as the fragrant meadows to the hot and dusty wayfarer of life. The main experience of a true Christian life should be joyful and hopeful, as things are glad that live in the sun. The elements of joy in our lot are abounding. The certainty of blessing is absolute. Nothing can harm us, nothing can daunt us, nothing can drive us to despair. But there are moments when thoughts and visions rise from deep springs within us and chase the joys. They may bury us in a gloom which yet is not chill and drear; which has a golden gleam of sunlight through it, chasing all its terrors away. There are moments when life in any form seems very solemn, very terrible, when we tremble before the vision of an undying existence, an infinite capacity of suffering or of being blessed; while we are conscious inwardly of fatal weakness, a deadly proneness to sin. Blessed, thrice blessed they, who in this dread crisis

see the form and clasp the hand of Him who has trodden the path before them, and trodden it till it issued in glory.

J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 53.

I. Notice here the singular combination of the compatibility and the union of two apparently contradictory things; though they feared they followed, and though they followed they feared. The fear was not enough to stop the following, nor the following sufficient to arrest the fear. There was a love in the fear which kept them following, and yet a nature in the following which still left them fearing. It was the fact of the following which originated the fear. And fear is the strongest fascination. There is always a tendency to go to what we greatly fear. It is a principle true in love. There is fear in all true love. And the fear in the love makes a part of the fascination of the love. So the following led up to the fear, and the fear led up to the following.

II. That walk to Jerusalem appears to me strangely illustrative of the path by which many of you are going to heaven. Going to heaven!—yes, you are going to heaven, but not enjoying all you might, or glorifying all you ought by the way. We come to the question, How is it that a real follower may be a real fearer? And I will find the answer on that road up to Jerusalem. Why did the disciples fear? (1) They had not adequate ideas of Him whom they followed. They did not know—what they learnt afterwards—what exceeding care He takes of His own, how by His suffering He was going to prevent their suffering, and by His own death to prevent their dying; they had not read the full character of Christ, therefore they misread their own future. (2) Though the disciples loved Christ, they did not love Him as He deserved. If they had done so, the love would have absorbed the fear; they would have rejoiced to endure with Him, even to the death. (3) They had not what their Master had—one great, fixed, sustaining aim. It was that which bore Him so bravely, and that would have borne them. (4) The disciples had their fears undefined. It was the indefinite which terrified them. Take, then, four rules. (1) You that follow and are afraid, fortify yourself in the thought of what Christ is—His person, His work, His covenant, and what He is to you. (2) Love Him very much, and realize your union with Him. (3) Set a high mark, and carry your life in your hand, so you may reach that mark, and do something for God. (4)

Often stop and say deliberately to yourself, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" and do not go on till you have got an answer.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 1867, p. 53.

REFERENCES: x. 32-45.—A. H. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 282; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 225. x. 33, 34.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 52. x. 35-38.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. i., p. 177. x. 35-40.—W. Romanis, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 111. x. 36.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 12.

Chap. x., ver. 38.—"Ye know not what ye ask."

PRAYERS offered in Ignorance answered in Love.

I. Let it be admitted that the prayer of James and John was rooted in ambition, still we may not forget that their ambition was to be nearest Christ; nor can we fail to observe that there are some things in their conduct which are worthy of our praise, and may be imitated by us with advantage. (1) In the first place they did ask. Now that was a great thing. How many are there from whose lips no prayer ever ascends into the ear of God! It is a great matter when one goes to Jesus for anything, since, by and by, no matter what he begins with, he will be found going to Him for everything. Whatever be thy desire, therefore, go to Him. (2) These brothers had a definite purpose in coming to Him. When He said to them, "What would ye that I should do for you?" they were not taken aback, but they set before Him a distinct request. Herein, again, they were greatly in advance of multitudes who presume to be their censors; for is it not too true that our prayers are frequently most vague and indefinite? Men confess sins of which they do not feel the guilt, utter adorations which they cannot appropriate, and offer prayers so general that they may mean anything or nothing. We ask things which we do not want, and omit many which we really do desire. (3) These brothers were honest and sincere in their request? (4) They did not pretend to ask this in order to keep up the appearance of faith in Jesus and attachment to Him. They actually desired to have the positions for which they made request. It is a thousand times better to pray sincerely about matters which, though they be secular and small, are real to us, than to pretend to pray about spiritual things, which are at the time no better to us than myths; and it would be a good rule to lay down for our observance, never to ask for anything unless we feel that we truly need it.

II. But we are ready to ask, If all this be true, what was there to be blamed in the petition? And to this I answer that, apart from the earthly ambition to be above the other disciples, I cannot find much that was wrong about their prayer. (1) They wished to be beside Him in His glory, but they had a very false conception of what that glory was. (2) They did not understand what was involved in the granting of their request. If we will but remember these two particulars, we shall begin to comprehend why so many of our prayers are apparently unanswered, and why so frequently we fail to recognise answers to our prayers when they do come.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Limitations of Life*, p. 160.

REFERENCES: x. 38.—H. N. Grimley, *Temple of Humanity*, p. 30. x. 39.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 93.

Chap. x., ver. 40.—"He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people."

WE learn from the text two great and important truths:—

I. That the followers of Christ are not necessarily His friends or true disciples. In the multitudes who accompanied Jesus out of Jericho: (1) Some, doubtless, followed Him out of mere curiosity. (2) Some followed because it was just then somewhat fashionable to do so. (3) Some followed with a view to worldly advantage. (4) Such following of Christ is of no real or lasting advantage to these followers themselves.

II. The text suggests to us that among a multitude of Christ's followers you may generally expect to find some friends. Jesus went out of Jericho *with His disciples* and a great number of people. (1) This should encourage us to persevere in our own following. (2) It should encourage us in relation to other followers as well as ourselves, and lead us to do and say all we can to encourage them.

J. MORGAN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 389.

REFERENCES: x. 40.—*Church of England Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 145. x. 46.—*Homilist*, vol. v., p. 52. x. 46-52.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 266; H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 1870, p. 172; G. Macdonald, *Miracles of our Lord*, p. 103; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 230. x. 46-57.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 364. x. 47.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 53. x. 47, 48.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 645. x. 49.—T. Keane, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 81; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1,389; R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 172. x. 49-50.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 74. x. 51.—*Ibid.*, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 38; A. Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, p. 71.

Chap. x., ver. 52.—"And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way."

I. To see spiritually is to see Christ, the light of the world, and to be penetrated with the sense of the beauty and fulness which are in Him.

II. A soul enlightened sees in Jesus that which is all its salvation and all its hope.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 79.

REFERENCES: x. 52.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 415; B. F. Westcott, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 456. xi. 1.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 136. xi. 1-11.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 26; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 235; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 372. xi. 3.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 82. xi. 4-6.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 146. xi. 6.—A. Scott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 322. xi. 8-10.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 177.

Chap. xi., ver. 11.—"And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when He had looked round about upon all things, He went out."

THE Silent Looks of Christ.

I. The Lord is always looking. He looketh from heaven and beholdeth the children of men. The Lord looked to see if there were any that feared Him and that honoured His name. There is no protection from His eye. This is a terrible statement to be delivered to the bad man! You are never alone. When you think you are alone, your solitude is but relative. "Whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" The question is unanswered and unanswerable. God fills the universe, overflows infinitude, and thou canst not escape His eye. The eyes of the Lord are very terrible, flames of fire are the only symbols by which they can be likened among us; but they are also gentle, melting with dewy tenderness, yearning with unutterable pity; looking out for us; watching our home-coming, looking over the hills and along the curving valleys, if haply they may see somewhat of the shadow of the returning child.

II. If such be the looks of the Father and the Son, how should we *return* looks that are so full of significance and purpose? Hear the word of the Lord: "*Look* unto Me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." How? Look not with the eyes of the body, not with curiosity; but with reverence,

with eagerness of heart, with determination of love, with all the urgency and importunity of conscious need. He asks us to look; to look at Himself; not on the throne of judgment, but in His capacity as Redeemer and Saviour of the world. We shall have to look; the only question is, How? Are we prepared for His coming? How are we prepared for His fan? By going to His cross. He proposed that we should meet Him in His weakness. He appoints the place. He says, "Meet Me where I am weakest; where My right hand is maimed, and my left; where My feet are pierced with iron, and My side is gashed with steel, and My temples are crushed with cruel thorns—meet Me there!" Then, having met Him there, when the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all His holy angels with Him, He will be the same Saviour, as gentle and as pitiful as ever. And now the Lord's hands are His again, He will use them for the opening of the door of His kingdom, and the lifting up of all who put their trust in Him.

PARKER, *The Ark of God*, p. 180.

Chap. xi., vers. 12-14.

THE Barren Fig-tree.

Consider: I. What is "fruit." The fruit of a tree is that which the sap formed in the branch; the sap, springing out of the root, passes through the stem, circulating through every little spray and tendril, deposits there the germ of fruit; and that fed by the same sap, warmed by the sun that shines on it, and strengthened by the wind, gets stronger and grows larger, till ripe and fit for the gathering. This is the operation in the kingdom of nature. Now look at that in the kingdom of grace. The Spirit of God is always flowing from the roots of the everlasting covenant of the Father's love, and it all flows through the Lord Jesus Christ. With those who are grafted into Christ there is a passage by which the Spirit may come to them. The sunshine of mercy and the wind of trial come, and these, operating together, soften and strengthen, and the individual takes the savour of the Spirit that flows into it; it sweetens, it grows, it fructifies. It is like that from which it comes; it is fit for the Father's use, and this is "fruit." Therefore, you see how much is required to make the action really pleasing to God. (1) First, you must be a member of the Lord Jesus Christ, or else you are cut off from any interest in the love of God. In Christ alone is life—you must be a branch. (2) The action must take its existence, its strength, its colour, its character, from God's

own Spirit. (3) The action, which is single, must have in it the flame of God's love.

II. As it is the intention of nature that everything shall be subservient to the production of fruit, the leaves are only to minister to the fruit. The plant produces fruit, first that it may bear fruit, and then the leaves protect the fruit after it is formed. So in grace, a thousand things a man may make ends which were never intended to be ends. And one is holiness of life. It is a beautiful leaf, like the longing of the soul; but the fruit is when you carry away a mind more humble under the truth, a mind more active for the service of God. Or perhaps your familiarity with Divine subjects increases, so that you are able to grasp the Word; understanding more its meaning, its mysteries being more unfolded to your view. It is well! These things feed the soul; but it is only a leaf, unless the heart thereby has taken a firmer hold upon Christ, and been watered in Divine things.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 36.

THE Barren Fig-tree.

I. When our Lord pronounced His curse upon the barren fig-tree, He taught men a great lesson by an acted parable. It was was not about fig-trees that He really spake. Doth the Lord take care for fig-trees? or saith He it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written; and the lesson that it teaches is that what He requires of His people is reality, not profession; truth in the inward heart, not outward appearance of goodness; not a fair show which man can see, while God sees that the inside is very different from that show; fruit—the real fruit of true holiness and inward devotion to God—not leaves; not the semblance and reputation and outward character only, without any corresponding clinging of the heart in faith and good works to God.

II. There can be no doubt that the first application of this very significant act of our Lord was to the Jewish nation. It was like a fair-looking fig-tree, full of leaves. The hill of Sion was a fair place and the joy of the whole nation. But there came One who, seeing afar this fine-looking tree having such a profusion of leaves, came nearer, if haply He might find the fruit thereon which those leaves should have indicated. Alas for the nation! The temple was doomed; not one stone, ere fifty years had passed, should be left standing on another. Under all the thick, fine, flourishing leaves not a single fruit

was to be found; no faith, no love, no Divine knowledge, no real understanding of the Scriptures, nor of the prophets, read in their synagogues every Sabbath day.

III. The case of the barren fig-tree applies also to individuals. We too each one of us, have to look to it very seriously, as in the sight of God, that our religion be not fair-seeming leaves only, but fruit too; not only outward show, but true earnest, inward reality. God forbid that we should be satisfied with ourselves. God forbid that we should rest in the consciousness that, in the sight of man or in our own overweening thoughts, we put out fair leaves and a good show; when in fact and as God sees us, there is no fruit of holy, humble, self-distrusting love; no good fruit of that sacred fear of God which alone keeps the heart of man watchful and sober and faithful in Christ until the end.

G. MOBERLY, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 169.

REFERENCES: xi. 12-14.—G. Macdonald, *Miracles of our Lord*, p. 252; J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 36; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 240; A. Lloyd, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 493. xi. 12-19.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 377. xi. 12-23.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 119.

Chap. xi., ver. 13.—**"And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, He came, if haply He might find anything thereon: and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet."**

THE words "for the time of figs was not yet" are not given as a reason why Christ found nothing but leaves. He went to this one tree which had leaves on it; and that, therefore, was one of those trees which naturalists describe as never shedding their leaves. On this species of fig-tree the fruit of the last year commonly hung to the spring of the next; and the foliage might thus well induce an expectation, which barrenness afterwards disappointed. As man, Christ perceived from the appearance of the tree that fruit might fairly be expected; and therefore, as God, He might justly condemn the plant.

I. The narrative of the curse of the barren fig-tree must be considered as designed in the first place, to represent to us the state and the doom of the Jewish people; without doubt the fig-tree itself is a figure of the nation of Israel. God had planted His vineyard, He had sent a succession of prophets and priests who, as dressers of that vineyard, might attend to its culture. But though everything had been done for it, yet the

fig-tree yielded no fruit. Amid all the emblems of moral painting there could not be found a more accurate delineation, both of national privilege and of national character, than that of the barren fig-tree.

II. The uniform tendency of ancient prophecy may require that we erase the words "for ever" from this curse when transferred to the Jewish nation, but we dare not blot out this awful conclusion when we apply it to the case of hypocritical professors in general. There are many ways of losing the soul; there is only one of saving it—even the receiving of Jesus Christ in simplicity and faith; and then glorifying Christ Jesus in the sanctity of practice. The former is the true and vital sap: the latter is the consequence—the production of fruits that glow and blossom with the bloom of the morning.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,191.

REFERENCES: xi. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 555; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 152. xi. 13, 14.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 92.

Chap. xi., ver. 15, 16.—"And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, etc."

LOOK: I. At the place where the market was held. It is called a temple. But you are not to think that it was actually a temple, properly so called; this would be to do the Jews great injustice. They were wonderfully scrupulous about their temple, and would never have actually held a market in any place which they themselves accounted sacred. It was in the outer court—the court of the Gentiles—that the sheep and oxen and doves were sold, and the money-changers had their tables. As the Jews did not regard this court as having any legal sanctity, they permitted it to be used as a market, the temple of those who came thither to worship.

II. There is too much reason for supposing that it was on purpose to show their contempt for the Gentiles, that the Jews allowed the traffic which Christ interrupted. And here, as we believe, you may find the true cause of our Redeemer's interference. It was not as a simple man, acting under the passions and upon the principles of men, but it was exclusively as a prophet and a teacher sent from God to inculcate great truths, that Jesus drove out the buyers and sellers. When Christ entered the court of the Gentiles, and found, in place of

the solemnity which should have pervaded a scene dedicated to worship, all the noise and tumult of a market, He had before Him the most striking exhibition of that vain resolve on the part of His countrymen, and which His Apostles strove in vain to counteract, the resolve of considering themselves as God's peculiar people, to the exclusion of all besides; and the refusing to unite themselves with converts from heathenism in the formation of one visible Church. Christ declared, as emphatically as He could have done in words, that the place where the strangers worshipped was to be accounted as sacred as that in which the Israelites assembled, and that what would have been held as a profanation of the one, was to be held a profanation of the other. To ourselves, at all events, this is manifestly the import of the symbolical action; it is prophetic of God's gracious purposes towards the Gentiles. It was our church, if we may so express it, for it was the church of the Gentiles, within whose confines the oxen were stabled, and the money-changers plied their traffic. They were our rights which the Redeemer vindicated, our privileges which He asserted when He made a scourge of small cords and said, "Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations a house of prayer? but ye have made the court of the Gentiles a den of thieves."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,589.

REFERENCES: xi. 15-17.—C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons Chiefly Practical*, p. 387; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 181. xi. 20.—H. Griffith, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vii., pp. 264, 281, 299. xi. 20-26.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 240. xi. 20-33.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 382. xi. 22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1,444; vol. vi., No. 328; J. Aldis, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 312; W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. ii., p. 211; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 98; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 67. xi. 22-24.—A. Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, p. 86. xi. 22-34.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 281. xi. 24.—A. Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, p. 78; T. G. Bonney, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 257. xi. 25.—A. Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, p. 102; J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 149.

Chap. xi., vers. 27, 28.—"As Jesus was walking in the temple, there come to Him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, and say unto Him, By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority?"

I. THERE is something just and legitimate in the words of Christ's enemies. The idea of a Divine revelation is inseparable from

the idea of authority. Jesus to the scribes is a person without authority. For them authority is wholly in the priestly institution. Now Jesus did not belong to the tribe of Levi and to the descent of Aaron. He had not received the official consecration, He had not demanded the investiture of the synagogue. He was without authority. Christ lived in their sight; they had been able, day after day, to look on His conduct and to scrutinise His acts. The whole of His life had been holiness and mercy. The scribes saw that, and it did not move them. It was not a question with them to know of Christ's accomplished works of holiness, but in virtue of what authority He did them. Holiness, justice and mercy may burn with a superhuman brilliancy, may inspire a sublime teaching, may bring forth magnificent works, all will be nothing; rather than that they will prefer a parchment of the synagogue conferring on its possessor all the rights of authority.

II. A grand teaching comes out of this scene. Let us never put questions of hierarchy and of the Church above the truth. That is a miserable narrowness which we must hold in abhorrence. The sectarian spirit is not peculiar to small sects, as is too readily believed. Perhaps nowhere does it grow and develop with more intensity and in a more unconscious manner than in the shelter of great institutions and ancient traditions. There is a moment when it becomes a crime; it is when it shuts its eyes to the light, it is when it judges with disdainful pride all that is done outside of its regulations, it is when it attributes to Beelzebub the most manifest works of the Spirit of God. We must choose between the Pharisaical spirit that says to Christ, "By what authority doest Thou these things?" and the spirit of truth which, when it sees the light, comes to the light, and says, God is here.

E. BERSIER, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 61.

REFERENCES: xi. 27, 28.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 98. xi. 27-33.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 249 xi. 29.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 53. xi. 30.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 99. xi. 43-8.—E. Cooper, *Practical Sermons*, vol. i., p. 47. xi.-xiii.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 329. xii. 1-9.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 40. xii. 1-12.—R. Calderwood, *The Parables*, p. 317; A. B. Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 447; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 254; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 382. xii. 6.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol ix., p. 284. xii. 10.—*Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 145. xii. 10, 11.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 108. xii. 10-12.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 318. xii. 15.—F. O. Morris, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 195.

Chap. xii., ver. 17.—**Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."**

I. The questioners here, we are told, were the Pharisees and the Herodians. With the Pharisees we are well acquainted. Of the Herodians we know nothing, except what this incident reveals. Whether they were a religious sect or a political party, we are not informed. Their name only shows that they were favourable to the ascendancy of Herod, and Herod's family. The Pharisees and the Herodians alike must have had a genuine interest in the question which they asked, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not." It was not a mere speculative question; it was a direct, pressing, personal, practical matter. It was a question which a perfectly sincere but somewhat bigoted Pharisee might have asked. But these men were not sincere. The evangelist speaks of their craftiness—their hypocrisy. Our Lord addresses them as hypocrites. Their object was not to solve their own difficulties, but to involve Christ in difficulties.

II. Our Lord's reply is not direct, not "Yes," nor "No." He asks for a penny, a denarius, the common silver coin of the day. What do they see there? The broad brow, the laurel crown, the stern, cruel, impenetrable visage of Tiberius, the reigning emperor, or perhaps the singularly handsome regular features of his predecessor, the now deified Augustus. And this portraiture, this name thus stamped on the coin, is, in some sense, a mark of ownership. It comes from Cæsar's mint and must be restored to Cæsar's exchequer. Our Lord declares, not, indeed, the divine right of Augustus or Tiberius, not the divine right of kings or emperors, nor yet the divine right of democracies, but the divine right of established governments, the divine right of law and order. The argument would have been just as valid, if, instead of Augustus or Tiberius, the head of the Roman republic had been stamped upon that coin.

III. When, having first asked, "Whose image is this?" Our Lord closes with the injunction, "Render to God the things that are God's," is it too much to infer that the connecting link between the symbol and the application was the familiar text at the beginning of Genesis, "In the image of God created He him." In the second creation the same image was restamped upon us. The blessed lines were resharpened as we passed once again through the mint of God. The obverse is still the

face of God, while the reverse is the cross of Christ! "Render to God the things that are God's."

BISHOP LIGHTFOOT, *Penny Pulpit* (New Series), No. 971.

REFERENCES: xii. 17.—J. G. Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., pp. 392, 402; vol. vii., pp. 24, 36; G. W. Shalders, *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 199. xii. 18-27.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 269; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 394. xii. 24, 25.—W. Gresley, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 381. xii. 24-7.—J. J. Murphy, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iv., p. 102. xii. 26, 27.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 116.

Chap. xii., ver. 27.—"God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living."

I. MAN the worker, who knows all the labour, all the skill of work, thinks much of work. Man the seer, who gathers in all his knowledge by sight, thinks much of sight. Man the speaker, who carries on all his projects by speech, thinks much of speech. And deeds done, and things seen, and powers of speech, so possess the world, so fill up its space, that few ever stop to examine what more there may be, and whether works and sight and speech are indeed the grand realities they claim to be; the all in all, which their size and pretensions make them seem to be. Men deal with themselves in the same way. They take the things done and seen, the words and actions, and call them their lives. And a great man is a man who has made a great noise in the world by the rush of his thoughts, or his words, or his deeds, and his life is written, strange contradiction of terms, his life is written, a catalogue that is of the most important sayings of the man, with the writer's reflections of them; I do not say that more can be done in writing; neither do I say that it is not sometimes good to do this; but to call it a man's life, that is indeed a curious trick of language, a strange untruth.

II. What is a man's life? The life, I mean, which really is himself; the life which, for good or evil, moves in the world; that life of which it is said, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap." Let me draw your attention to *all having it*. All in God's kingdom have God's life. This was what stirred the heathen world so when the first message of life came. Philosophy, if true, only touched a few learned, favoured men, whilst the whole world lay in emptiness and misery and hunger of soul. They knew what it was to have life offered to all. What then is life in its practical human sense? I answer, practically, life is not doing, but bearing; life is the inward patience which every minute is content to bear what that

minute brings to be borne, whether it bring movement or non-movement, work to be done or the waiting without work. The readiness to bear and obey is life. Life lives, is always living, always quietly waiting on its day, gently bearing each little annoyance, and so learning to bear; firmly meeting each little task, and so learning to work; and so at length the hero is made God's hero, the man who bears and does all things gently, easily, lovingly; and men marvel, as time passes, how silently he has taken his place in the hearts of men; and when he is gone, even like his Lord, he becomes known in the parting, in the evening, and hearts burn within them as they think of him.

E. THRING, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 209.

REFERENCE: xii. 28-34.—R. Lee, *Sermons*, p. 156.

Chap. xii., vers. 29, 30.—"And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."

THE Ideal of Christian Consecration.

Notice: I. The character of the love of God. It is not necessary that we should accurately determine the philosophical signification of the words—heart, soul, mind, and strength or might, in the Hebrew of Deuteronomy, or the Greek of Mark. Briefly, Christ is saying that the whole man must be enlisted in our love of God. (1) God claims from us a warm personal affection. Nothing will make up to God for the want of affection. The highest appreciation, the noblest worship, is that of love. (2) God must be loved for His moral excellence. Not only must our conscience approve our affection; it will be ever supplying us with new material for exalted worship. The sense of His righteousness will kindle gratitude into adoration; passionate desire after God will become enthusiasm for God as our moral sensibilities are disciplined to the perception of His holiness. (3) God claims from us, moreover, an intelligent affection. We must know whom we worship and wherefore we worship Him. Truth is a prime element of reverence, and reason and understanding have as their function to guide us in the knowledge of the truth. (4) God claims from us that we love Him with all our strength. The whole force of our character is to be in our affection for Him.

II. The unity of spiritual life in this love. The command

of the text is introduced by a solemn proclamation, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." Consider the infinite worthiness of God. He is the source and object of all our powers. There is not a faculty which has not come from Him, which is not purified and exalted by consecration to Him. As all our powers make up one man—reason and conscience, emotion and will uniting in a complete human life—so for spiritual harmony and religious satisfaction there must be full consecration and discipline of all our powers.

III. The grounds and impulses of this love. In reality it was but one reason—God is worthy of it; and the impulse to render it comes directly from our perception of His worthiness and the knowledge that He desires it from us. The claim for love, like all the Divine claims, is grounded in the character of God Himself, and it takes the form of commandment here because the Jews were "under the law."

A. Mackennal, *The Life of Christian Consecration*, p. 1, (see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 200).

References: xii. 29.—R. Lee, *Sermons*, p. 169. xii. 29, 30.—R. Molyneux, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 279. xii. 29, 31.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xix., p. 93; R. Lee, *Sermons*, p. 197. xii. 30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 162; R. Lee, *Sermons*, p. 183.

Chap. xii., vers. 30, 31.—"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment," etc.

The True Application of Christian Doctrines.

I. Jesus came, first, to teach men of God. Without this knowledge man can never understand himself, either as to his nature, his duties, or his possibilities. Jesus taught men, (1) that God is Spirit, (2) that man is spirit also, (3) that between us and God is the relationship of child to parent, for He revealed unto human kind the Fatherhood of Deity.

II. Jesus gave great instruction touching the destiny of man. The doctrine of immortality had many disciples before He came. But it is none the less true that Jesus brought life and immortality to light. He brought life to light because He put a proper definition on it. And by Himself living rightly, the first man that had ever done it, he showed all men what life was and what it meant. He brought immortality to light in His resurrection from the grave. His descent to, and His ascent from, the place of the dead, demonstrated that the living

die not at all; demonstrated that the body is one thing and the life within another; demonstrated that the flesh alone is corruptible, but that the spirit is beyond touch or taint of mortality.

III. There is very little speculation among people touching the teachings of Jesus, and the reason is, because His teachings are too plain to leave anything in doubt; and where there is no doubt there can be no speculation. What Paul meant you can speculate about; for Paul saw things as through a glass, darkly. But what Jesus meant you cannot speculate about, for He saw the truth face to face, and His statements are transparent. All, therefore, that remains for us to do, touching the teachings of Jesus, is to apply them to the government of our lives. The teachings of the Master are, therefore, practical; and they are of actual service to you and me, provided that we have a desire to live rightly; and this living rightly includes both our treatment of ourselves and our treatment of others. If you read the sayings of Jesus, you will find that He had an exalted opinion of man. Other men in His name have spoken meanly of man. Jesus never spoke meanly of him. He always graded men up, never down. He could see in man not only something worth saving, but something that was so valuable that it justified Him in dying to save it. Contemplate Calvary in the light which it throws upon yourself. If you are what it reveals you to be, how nobly you should live.

W. H. MURRAY, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 246.

REFERENCES: xii. 31,—R. Duckworth, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 193; R. Lee, *Sermons*, p. 228; J. H. Thom, *Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ*, 2nd series, p. 300.

Chap. xii., ver. 32.—"Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth."

THE Divine Echo in the Human Heart.

God's word may be received controversially, speculatively, or lovingly; men may argue about it, or let it argue with them to their conviction and redemption. Take for example the doctrine, Man is a sinner. You may make it a matter of controversy, and by all the poor devices of self-conceit may endeavour to escape its consequences; it may be met with flat denial, or received with many modifications. But take it into the heart, when the heart is in its best mood, ponder it when far from the influence of the world's excitement and flattery, and say whether there be not a voice which responds affirmatively to the tremendous charge. Take again the doctrine, Man

needs a Saviour. It is possible to meet such a doctrine in a captious and resentful spirit; it denies the possibility of self-redemption; it dismisses all the fancies which the soul has been treasuring, and shows man his poverty and weakness. But take it also into the heart under circumstances which allow it to be carefully considered, and say whether there be not a voice answering God's appeal, with "Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth." We do not ask for the acceptance of doctrines which ignore or override the instincts and experience of the world; on the contrary, Christianity addresses itself to the intuitions of every man. What are the practical consequences of our having this responsive faculty?

I. Man is made a co-worker with God; not a machine, but a co-operating agent. This gives confidence to personal hope and authority to personal teaching.

II. Man enjoys the restraints of conscience. Upon practical morals man is his own Bible; he carries an unwritten law which warns him from forbidden ground. The conscience is God's witness to our apostasy. The Bible appeals to it, and works with its full consent.

III. God bases His judgment upon the responsive faculty. The judgment day will be short, because every man will be his own witness.

PARKER, *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. v., p. 603.

Chap. xii., ver. 34.—"And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him. Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

IT was one of the many instances in which Jesus took a very kind view—and saw, and was not afraid to say that He saw—the good that was in everyone. Many perhaps see it, who do not think it well to say that they see it. You need not be afraid. True praise never does any harm. On the contrary, it softens and humbles.

I. But there is a much higher lesson than this, contained in the kindliness of our Saviour's conduct. If any of you are ever inclined to think of God as a faultfinder—as One who is quick to see what is wrong and who does not see and appreciate what is good in us—read the accounts of Christ's intercourse with those among whom He was thrown; and you will unlearn your false estimate of that kind, loving, hopeful heart.

II. The text shows clearly that there is a kingdom of God in this world, and that it has distinct boundary lines. These boundary lines do not shade off, so that either it should be

impossible to say whether you are in it or not in it, or that you can be partly in it and partly not in it. The words evidently convey the contrary: you may be "near" it, or you may be far from it, but either you are in it, or you are out of it. And now the question necessarily forces itself upon us, What was there in this man which made Christ speak of him as "Near to the kingdom" of His grace. (1) This scribe spoke practically and sensibly and without prejudice—as Christ expresses it, "discreetly." And the evangelist gives this as the very reason for our Saviour's judgment about him. (2) It is plain that he saw before his age and generation, the true, relative value of the types and ceremonies of the Jewish Church. He recognised them as entirely inferior to the great principles of truth and love. (3) His mind had travelled so far as to see that the sum and substance of all religion is love, first to God, and then, growing out of it, to man. (4) And perhaps, still more than all, that enlightened Jew had been attracted and drawn near to the person of Christ. Consequently he consulted Him as a teacher, "Which is the first commandment of all?" and when Christ had solved the question, he gave his ready assent, and hailed Him as the great exponent of the mind of God. "Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth"—his intellect following where his faith had led the way, to one centre, and that centre—Christ.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 293.

Chap. xii., ver. 34.—"Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

NEARNESS to the Kingdom of God.

Consider: I. In what this nearness consists. The current idea is that we are not far from the kingdom of God if we stand in any kind of touch or connection with it. But nearness to the kingdom of God implies more than this; it implies an *inward* connection, a motion of the heart, a drawing of the soul towards it. When indifference to Christ, the Sovereign of this kingdom, or to God Himself, still rules in any human heart, it were indeed unfitting to speak of nearness. We enter the kingdom of heaven through conversion. We are not far from the kingdom of God when we are awakened by God, but still unconverted. Conversion is in its essential nature a new birth, and to be not far from the kingdom of God is to be *on the way* to the new birth, but not yet born again.

II. What is the worth of the nearness to the kingdom of God which we have described. It is a great thing to be near

the kingdom; but is an unsatisfactory, we might rather say, a dangerous, condition. (1) Of what use is it to stand on the frontiers of God's kingdom? Of what use to see the promised land from afar, and to know that for us it is lost for ever? Of what use was it to Agrippa to have said to Paul: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian? (2) But not only for the individual, for the kingdom itself, this state of being not far off is less advantageous than we might have supposed. We might fancy that it would greatly further the advancement of that kingdom that there should be many standing, not indeed within, but at the doors. But the result has been that the kingdom of God has been despised. Men have thought that it was leaving the world as it was, that it had brought a shadowy kingdom of heaven upon earth, but never a true one. And they have said: Let us keep to the path on which we travelled before. Open scorners and mockers have not done nearly so much to injure Christianity in the opinion of men as those who stop halfway, and do not let their light shine before men.

III. But even amongst those who are not far from the kingdom there are different classes. A wide distinction may be drawn between those who feel an impulse drawing them to enter the kingdom, and those who are contented where they are. The noblest natures and the most honest minds have often to struggle long, and to wait for the seal of their adoption. Happy are they. At last the door will open to them; and it may be they shall be placed far above those who found the entrance quickly and with little toil.

R. ROTHE, *Predigten*, p. 60.

WE are led to form a favourable opinion of the man to whom these words were addressed. He seems to have been thoughtful and reverent, to have been attracted by the teaching and character of Christ, and to have detected the nothingness of all religion not based upon the love of God and man. He was an earnest, true-hearted man, and his earnestness made him clear-sighted. It was a comfort to him to be told that holiness of heart was the one great thing required by God.

I. It was his declaration in verse 33 which drew from our Lord the remarkable judgment, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." To enter the kingdom of God is to become a true Christian; first to understand, and then to obey habitually, the laws by which God endeavours to govern our hearts. A man is qualified to be a member of any earthly kingdom by

acknowledging its government and yielding a willing obedience to its laws. And so with the kingdom of God. There is a certain state of mind which fits a man to be a loyal subject of that kingdom. To be Christlike, to acknowledge Christ's person, to love Him, to try to find out what He wishes and do it humbly in dependence on Him—this is to have entered the kingdom of God, and to be an active citizen in support of its government. And the words of our text remind us that there are approaches leading up to this holy city. There is a state of mind in which we are nearly Christians, but not quite. We have not actually entered the kingdom of God, but we are not far from it.

II. Now it is plain that there are vast differences among those who are "not far from the kingdom of God,"—campers, as it were, on the frontiers of Christendom. There are some who deserve praise for having advanced so far; others—doubtless infinitely more—who deserve blame for having pushed no farther. The scribe to whom our Lord spoke belonged plainly to the first of these classes. He had done what so few of us, living in the full blaze of Christian light, are able to do—he had come to see that religion was essentially an inward spiritual thing, a thing of the heart; and that, however correct a man's acts or beliefs might be, he was not a religious man unless with every power of his body, his intellect and his soul he loved God and his fellow-men. Those to whom the words of Christ can be addressed in a tone of approval are, in our day, those who have not had great advantages, but have made the most of these. God has all along been preparing their hearts though they knew it not. When at last His call speaks to them in some vehement tone—perhaps by a terrible sorrow, or an outburst of wickedness in some one for whom they care—we feel sure that they will embrace the call.

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 63.

THE deepest interest must ever attach to those utterances of Christ in which He has pronounced upon the moral and spiritual state of those who came before Him. He knew what was in man: he knew, that is, the human heart in all its tendencies and capacities; and, besides, he could infallibly read individual hearts with clear decision and perfect equity.

Notice: I. That our Lord speaks of His kingdom as a definite reality. It is a distinct sphere or region with a frontier line marking it off from all else. Between the Law which the scribe

professed and the Gospel which Christ was offering, there was a sharp, intelligible, boundary, which he must cross if he would pass from the one to the other.

II. But while this is made abundantly clear, while it is certain that Christ has created a sharply-defined barrier between the kingdom of God, and all that lies outside it, it is equally clear that he recognises, welcomes and rewards every approach towards that kingdom. He does not look upon all as equally distant from God until they have obeyed His call, and enrolled themselves as His disciples. Wherever conscience is awake, wherever a man is cherishing the light, is fearful lest by his unfaithfulness he should turn it into darkness, he is assuredly near, and is coming nearer, steadily nearer, to the kingdom of God. There is nothing more touching or more admirable in the ministry of Jesus Christ than His untiring outlook for what is hopeful in human nature.

III. Nevertheless, there was a higher state for this man to reach; he was on the verge of the kingdom; he was still outside it, and why? Because, though he understood the necessity of love, he had not yet learned to love; because, though he knew how he ought to walk and to please God, he did not know himself; he had as yet no sense of his own weakness, no real perception of the evil which taints all men's service, no consciousness of that hopeless insufficiency which can be met only from without and by a Divine Deliverer. And more than this, he had no idea as yet of his own relation to Christ. He knows not what He is, and what He is capable of becoming to him. The critical, redeeming step to which Christ invites us all is impossible until a man awakes to see the gulf which lies between what he is and what he ought to be, and to feel and know that never can he bridge that gulf by any mere effort of his own. When a man comes to realize what sin is; when he sees that if he is to be saved from himself, his weakness must be reinforced by a supernatural strength, and casts himself upon the Deliverer who is mighty to save, then the passage takes place from the natural and earthly to the Divine and heavenly, the boundary line is crossed; he who was nigh is no longer outside, he is within the kingdom, a fellow-citizen with the saints of the kingdom of God.

R. DUCKWORTH, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 193.

OBEDIENCE to God the Way to Faith in Christ.

In the words of the text we are taught, first, that the Christian's

faith and obedience are not the same religion as that of natural conscience, as being some way beyond it; secondly, that this way is "not far," not far in the case of those who try to act up to their conscience; in other words, that obedience to conscience leads to obedience to the Gospel, which, instead of being something different altogether, is but the completion and perfection of that religion which natural conscience teaches.

I. We are plainly taught in Scripture that perfect obedience is the standard of Gospel holiness. A multitude of texts show that the Gospel leaves us just where it found us, as regards the necessity of our obedience to God; that Christ has not obeyed instead of us, but that obedience is quite as imperative as if Christ had never come; nay, is pressed upon us with additional sanctions; the difference being, not that He relaxes the strict rule of keeping His commandments, but that He gives us spiritual aids, which we have not except through Him, to enable us to keep them. And if we look to the history of the first propagation of the Gospel, we find this view confirmed. As far as we can trace the history, we find the early Christian Church was principally composed of those who had long been in the habit of obeying their consciences carefully, and so preparing themselves for Christ's religion, that kingdom of God from which the text says they were not far.

II. Now let us see the consequences which follow from this great Scripture truth. We see the hopelessness of waiting for any sudden change of heart, if we are at present living in sin. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." This is the exhortation. God acknowledges no man as a believer in His Son who does not anxiously struggle to obey His commandments to the utmost; to none of those who seek without striving, and who consider themselves safe, to none of these does He give "power to become the sons of God." To obey God is to be near Christ, and to disobey is to be far from Him.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. viii., p. 201.

I. LOOK at some of those things which bring a man near the kingdom of God. (1) It may be said that those are not far from it whose life brings them into connexion with some of its members and privileges. (2) A man is not far from the kingdom of God when he shows a spirit of reverence and candour towards Christ. (3) Another feature which brings a man closer to the Gospel is kindliness and amiability of nature. (4) The last

hopeful feature we mention is an interest in the spiritual side of things.

II. Consider what is needed to make a man decidedly belong to the kingdom of God: (1) The first requisite is the new birth. (2) The other is the new life.

J. KER, *Sermons*, p. 121.

You may be very near the kingdom, and yet never enter it, and of all cases of spiritual ruin there are none so melancholy, none so sad, as of those who were almost saved, and yet were lost. No doubt there is a sense in which, until we are born again, we are all equally far from the kingdom. The difference between the dead and the living, between the darkness of midnight and the radiance of noon, is one not of degree, but of kind. There is some truth here, but it is truth that requires to be wisely and guardedly stated. There is a hard and extravagant way of stating it that is repugnant to thoughtful and cultured minds, and sometimes brings the Gospel into ridicule. There cannot be a question that, of persons yet unsaved, some are nearer to salvation than others. There are circumstances in life, there are elements of character, there are conditions of mind, which make this man's case more hopeful than that, and his conversion a thing less to be wondered at. Note four features in this young scribe's case, which probably brought to our Lord's lips the words of my text.

I. He was "not far from the kingdom," because he had begun to think seriously on religion. You observe that in his manner and language there is not a trace of frivolity or captiousness. The spirit of earnest, reverential inquiry is one to be commended and encouraged, and rarely leads a man into the entanglement of error. Because this lawyer was devoutly feeling his way, and seeking further light, our Lord looked him kindly in the face, and said "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

II. He was not far from the kingdom, because he had already begun to attach greater importance to the spirit than to the letter. "To love the Lord with all one's heart, and to love one's neighbour as oneself, was more," he said, "than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." As a German theologian profoundly observes on this passage, "He who recognises the worth of love is near the kingdom of God; he who has himself felt it is in that kingdom."

III. This young man was pronounced "not far from the

kingdom of God," because he was sincerely desirous of acting up to the measure of light which he possessed.

IV. He was declared to be "not far from the kingdom of God," because he was amiable and virtuous. He was strictly moral, circumspect and pure. He was a gentleman, a man of sound principle, and good breeding. His high-toned principle and character were in his favour, and made his salvation more probable than had they been otherwise.

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *The City Youth*, p. 267.

REFERENCES: xii. 34.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1,517; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 77; F. W. Farrar, *In the Days of thy Youth*, p. 265; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 170; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 139; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 120; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. v., p. 297. xii. 35-44.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 274. xii. 37.—S. A. Brooke, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 31; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 19; A. Mursell, *Ibid.*, vol. xxiii., p. 388; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 36. xii. 38-40.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 401.

Chap. xii., vers. 41-4.

THE Widow's Gift.

I. Look first at the giver; a widow and a poor widow. Sorrow often makes people selfish, but the benevolent donor in the case before us was a widow.

II. Look next at the gift. Two mites. Wealth called the offering small, commerce accounted it small, religious custom reckoned it small; but, in relation to the means of the donor and the heart of the donor, and in the judgment of God, the gift was exceedingly great.

III. The interest attaching to it is greatly increased by the place or scene of the gift. It was bestowed in the temple of God, it was deposited in one of thirteen boxes in the women's court. It is meet and right that we give where we receive. And what a place of blessing is a true house of the Lord; it is Bethel and holy ground; it is beautiful Zion and Bethesda, a house of light and love, of healing and salvation and redemption.

IV. And what, fourthly, was the object of this gift? These two mites were given as a freewill offering to the support of the temple, its institutions and its services, and the offering them, with this intent, constituted this poor widow a contributor to all that the temple yielded, to all it offered to heaven, and to all it gave to the children of men.

V. Note the spirit of the offering. The spirit of the offering was the spirit of true piety and of real godliness. It may be that in her worship she had been saying, "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength," and that love, increased by worship, carried these two mites from her scrip to her hand, and from her hand to the treasury of the Lord.

VI. Notice the Divine recognition of the gift. Jesus Christ saw the gift, estimated it, approved it, and commended the giver.

VII. There is something to be learned from the fact that Jesus Christ calls attention to this gift. Such lessons as these: (1) That the greatness of a gift depends upon the possessions of the individual. After the gift has been made: (2) that grief need not hinder giving; (3) that we may learn well-doing from each other; (4) to act as under our great Master's eye.

S. MARTIN, *Rain upon the Mown Grass*, p. 380.

REFERENCES: xii. 41.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 277. xii. 41-44.—H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 83; vol. xxviii., p. 140; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 401; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 152; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 314. xii. 42.—*Ibid.*, vol. vii., p. 150.

Chap. xii., ver. 43, 44.—**"And Jesus called unto Him His disciples, and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury," etc.**

THE Widow's Offering and the Stones of the Temple.

The spirit that led the disciples to admire the stones of the temple, while Christ pointed them to the widow's offering, is a spirit natural to us all; and by considering it in the passage before us we shall reach certain facts which will guide and help us in our daily Christian life. The truths suggested by this contrast are twofold.

I. The true measure of sacrifice. Not the greatness of the outward act, but the perfectness of the inward motive. We judge men's acts by their outward forms, rather than by the spirit which impelled them—we are so apt to regard only the great temple stones. In the light of the judgment day many of the world's notions will be altered. There are unknown heroes and silent martyrs now, whom the world passes by. It is not the great outward act, but the perfect yielding of the soul, which constitutes the sacrifice which God will not despise.

II. The true idea of a temple. The disciples saw God's dwelling-place in the house of stone, with its Holy of Holies

and altars of sacrifice; Christ saw it in the broken heart of the widow. This idea characterised all His teachings. It is the inner motive and heart, as He constantly proclaimed, that God regards, and in the *spirit* that He must be served.

III. From the foregoing arise three practical lessons. (1) A lesson of duty. Every man may be spiritually heroic. Believe that the work you are appointed to do is God's work, and you will always find scope for the heavenly spirit, and for living out the principle which Christ indicated when He pointed to the widow's mite. (2) A lesson of encouragement. Love God in all things—consider no sacrifice too great or too small—do your best in everything as in His sight, and you will find Him everywhere. (3) A lesson of warning. The Jews had come to see God only in the temple at Jerusalem. As a consequence they became formalists—the surrender of their souls was forgotten. And the splendid temple fell. So now and ever. Forget the divinity of all life, and the temple of your soul will become desolate.

E. L. HULL, *Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 213.

REFERENCES: xiii. 1.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 177. xiii. 1-13.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 279. xiii. 8. —*Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 160. xiii. 24-36.—C. Stanford, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 277; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 290.

Chap xiii., ver. 31.—**"Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away."**

THINGS Temporal and Things Eternal.

I. First, our Lord declares to us, "Heaven and earth shall pass away." By heaven and earth are meant this state of things of which we have experience; this earth as it is an habitation for human beings; the sun as it is a light to us, the moon and the stars as in any way connected with man. We know that we ourselves shall all die; nay, we know also by past experience that nations many times die; and, so far as it is a death to perish utterly from the knowledge of future ages, so there are many generations of the whole human race which in this sense are to us dead. But our Lord's words go further than this; they tell us that there will be an absolute end of all worldly things whatever, that all the human race shall come to an end.

II. But yet I quite allow that this portion of the text without the other might, and I think would, have very little practical

effect. For granting that heaven and earth shall pass away, and that our highest earthly labours are bestowed therefore on that which is perishable, yet still if this perishable is all that we know of, it becomes after all of very great and paramount importance to us; it may be but a poor thing to live, but live we must by the very necessity of our nature, and we must love this life, if we know of nothing better. And therefore simple declarations of the perishableness of earthly things are really of no effect whatever. No man heeds them, or can heed them, for our nature repels them. It is, however, altogether different when we take in the second part of the text, and are told that Christ's words shall not pass away. For if there be anything in the world eternal, then that which is perishable, even though it may last for many years, or many ages, must become infinitely insignificant in comparison. If some of our works must pass away utterly and some abide for ever, the glory and value of the first becomes as nothing by reason of the greater glory of the second. We have a work that is never to perish, a suffering yielding a multiplied harvest of blessing, if we firmly believe that there are things which shall not pass away.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 185.

REFERENCES: xiii. 31.—A. Blomfield, *Sermons in Town and Country*, p. 16; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 193.

Chap. xiii., ver. 33.—"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is."

I. THIS word *watching* is a remarkable word; remarkable because the idea is not so obvious as might appear at first sight. We are not simply to believe, but to watch; not simply to love, but to watch; not simply to obey, but to watch. To watch for what? for that great event, Christ's coming. Do you know the feeling in matters of this life, of expecting a friend, expecting him to come, and he delays? To watch for Christ is a feeling such as this; as far as feelings of this world are fit to shadow out those of another. He watches for Christ who has a sensitive, eager, apprehensive mind; who is awake, alive, quick-sighted, zealous in seeking and honouring Him; who looks out for Him in all that happens, and who would not be surprised, who would not be over-agitated or overwhelmed, if he found that He was coming at once.

II. This then it is to watch; to be detached from what is present and to live in what is unseen, and to live in the thought of Christ as He came once, and as He will come again; to desire

His second coming, from our affectionate and grateful remembrance of His first. And this it is in which we shall find that men in general are wanting. What is meant by watching, and how it is a duty, they have no definite idea; and thus it accidentally happens that watching is a suitable test of a Christian, in that it is that particular property of faith and love, which, essential as it is, men of this world do not even profess; that particular property, which is the life or energy of faith and love, the way in which faith and love, if genuine, show themselves.

III. Christ warns His disciples of the danger of having their minds drawn off from the thought of Him, by whatever cause; He warns them against all excitements, all allurements of the world; He warns them by the instance of the rich man whose soul was required, of the servant who ate and drank, and of the foolish virgins. When He comes, they will one and all want time; then head will be confused, then eye will swim, then tongue falter, then limbs totter, as men who are suddenly awakened. Year passes after year silently, Christ's coming is ever nearer than it was, and, as He comes nearer earth, we may approach nearer heaven. Every act of obedience is an approach, an approach to Him who is not far off, though He seems so, but close behind this visible screen of things which hides Him from us. He is behind the material framework; earth and sky are but a veil between Him and us; and the day will come when He will rend that veil and show Himself to us. And then, according as we have waited for Him, will He recompense us.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 319.

REFERENCES: xiii. 33-37.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 116; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 138.

Chap. xiii., ver. 34.—"The Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave . . . to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch."

CONSIDER, I. The work of the servants. And here we observe: (1) That work is the common duty of all in Christ's house. (2) This work of Christ's house is varied to different individuals. (3) Each individual has means for ascertaining his own work.

II. The watch of the porter. The porter must stand at the door of every heart while that heart pursues its work.

III. The bearing of these two duties on each other. If watching were absent work would be: (1) blind and without a purpose; (2) discouraging and tedious; (3) formal and dead.

Without work, watching would be: (1) solitary; (2) subject to many temptations; (3) unready for Christ.

J. KER, *Sermons*, p. 139.

CHRIST appointed to His Servants an Authority, a Work, and a Watch.

I. Look first at the Church's authority. The more we serve, and the lowlier the place we take, the more is the authority given. For, what is authority? Not position, not office, but a certain moral power, the power of truth, the power of the affections, the power of virtue over vice, the power of the true over the false, the power of faith over sight, the essential power of the great Head delegated to all His members, which is ultimately to command the universe? It is your authority to feel as a man who, having found true peace with God, goes about with the ennobling consciousness that He is in the possession of an invaluable treasure. It is your authority, though a poor miserable sinner, to wear the badge, and carry the name, and act under the signet of the King of kings. It is your authority, therefore, to go to every man, to every single man under heaven, in the consciousness that you have received a Divine instruction to this effect, and tell that man of the glorious things of the Gospel of Christ.

II. Every man's work is special. The authority was general, the work is specific, for He says, "He gave authority to His servants, and to every man *his work*." It was very kind of our good Master to give us work to do during His absence. For nothing beguiles the time more. Therefore work. The warrant of your election is, that you work. Woe to the man who thinks to eat his Master's bread and does not work. Woe to the man who would feed upon the promises without the service.

III. In the household of faith, as every man has his ability to work strengthened because he leans upon authority, so every man has his work sweetened by looking at it through the windows of hope, for every workman is a watcher too. There are two ways of watching. There is a watching against a thing we fear, and there is a watching for a thing we love. Most persons when they are told to watch, think chiefly of what they are to watch against; but I conceive it was far more in our Saviour's mind to bid us to be full of what we are to watch for. For, if we watch against sin, is it not for this very reason, because we are watching for Christ? "I keep the door, that no man may

come in, because I am keeping it open that there may be room for Him when He comes."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 129.

THE Lord's Second Coming.

I. A community of monks was established on the shores of the Bosphorus, during the fourth century, called "the sleepless ones." They numbered three hundred, and were divided into six choirs, who sang alternately day and night; without ceasing, their songs of praise arose to that Divine Redeemer who will one day come to be our Judge. Thus with unflagging diligence they looked out for the return of the Bridegroom. Without following the example of those old monks in their giving up worldly business, and their mistaken notion that they were any better because they wore miserable clothes and denied themselves comfortable food and lodging—without following their example in these respects, yet if we are the wise and enlightened generation that we claim to be, we shall give heed to the voice of warning now sounding in the services of Advent, reminding us emphatically that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

II. The image employed in the text, which represents Him as a traveller who has gone into a far country, is one so much in harmony with our human sympathies, that it brings Him very close to our hearts. Jesus has left His people for a season, just as a man leaves his home, to sojourn in a distant land; a man whose letters are devoured with eagerness by the dear ones who are impatiently awaiting his return. The Lord Jesus, for whose coming we are waiting, bids us watch. He only is watching for the Saviour who is zealous in seeking and honouring Him; who daily thinks of his Lord as He came once in great humility, and as He will come again with power and glory.

J. N. NORTON, *Old Paths*, p. 24.

REFERENCE: xiii. 34-37.—R. M. McCheyne, *Additional Remains*, p. 243.

Chap. xiii., vers. 35, 36.

WHAT does the word Watchfulness mean, as used in the Holy Scriptures? It means, being on the look-out, living in expectation of Jesus Christ, doing His work, attending to His charge, occupying ourselves so as to improve the talents, one or more, He has entrusted to us, trying to do the best with our Lord's money that He may receive His own with interest. In short,

watchfulness means leading that sort of life which, were it to be broken off to-morrow, would turn to our great gain.

I. Watchfulness implies that we are looking for Christ, living in expectation of His coming—living, that is, with the recollection of our mortality, as knowing that in any case our time on earth is short, that the day must soon be here when we shall die. The reluctance to think about death is a great stumbling-block to us all. It prevents our making any due preparation against it. They were wiser among the heathen of old, who in the midst of their banquets, used to have carried round the figure of one dead, with this inscription, "Eat and drink, for you will soon be as this."

II. Consider what will be the life of the watchful Christian—of him who is indeed waiting for his Lord. It will be a life of sobriety, a life of active service, a life of patient continuance in well-doing, a life whose end and aim is to be approved by the Master when He cometh. In the parables of the Talents and of the Pounds we have the warning of a soul lost, not for committing gross sins, but simply for inactivity—for keeping its powers laid up, hiding from use its Lord's money; and surely that is a warning that must come home to many of us. For who of us has laboured as he might for God's glory and his fellow-creature's good? Who of us, were he summoned to-day, could produce a life of which the greater part of its energies had been turned to work the Lord's work? Are we not rather chargeable, in our conscience, with the offence of having wasted our Lord's goods, of having squandered on ourselves, or on mere pleasures, those powers, that wealth, that influence, which were put into our hand to be administered for far higher and nobler ends? Let us watch and pray, that His coming may not take us by surprise. Then we shall be glad and not sorry when the time of our watching is at an end. He will make us full of joy with the light of His countenance.

R. D. B. RAWNSLEY, *Sermons in Country Churches*, p. 107.

REFERENCES: xiii. 35.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 169. xiii. 35-7.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 243.

Chap. xiii., ver. 37.—"And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

THE exhortation to watch implies that there is danger, and if our Lord says to all, "Watch," all must be exposed to it. And danger there is; nay, dangers manifold there are on all sides of us.

I. The interests at stake are unspeakably great. Let any opportunity slip, and there is so much lost for eternity. Let all your opportunities slip, and heaven itself is lost. You may seek to enter in, but shall not be able—you shall find the gate shut.

II. We are ever in danger of surprisal. Opportunities of promoting our own spiritual progress, the good of others and God's glory, often present themselves unexpectedly, and just as unexpectedly pass away; and therefore we must watch. Very frequently, too, temptation presents itself at an unexpected time, and in an unexpected form, and we must watch. Satan meets men when they least expect him, and we ought to watch.

III. Satan ever comes in disguise, and ever adopts that disguise which seems least apt to excite suspicion. He comes to the flock of Christ in sheep's clothing; sometimes in the clothing of a shepherd; yea, at times he seems transformed into an angel of light. We must watch. That is the condition of our safety. For here we as spiritual beings are in constant danger, and can be preserved only as the birds of the air are preserved, by constant watchfulness.

IV. If you keep in view the one great object our Lord commands us to be looking for, you will be watchful in all things. It is His coming again. He comes to judge the world, and He comes to reckon with each individual. Your Master has gone into a far country. Your eye for the present sees Him not; but you have each a charge given by Him. Each of you has his appointed work. You are to watch for His coming, and at any hour He may come.

W. NICHOLSON, *Redeeming the Time*, p. 55.

REFERENCES: xiii. 37.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 8; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 280; vol. v., p. 273; J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Children*, p. 79. xiii.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 418. xiv. 1-11.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 295. xiv. 1-72.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 156.

Chap. xiv., ver. 3.—"And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on His head."

IT was while our Lord was reclining at an evening meal, where Lazarus and many other guests were present, and where the less contemplative, but probably, not upon the whole less

exemplary sister Martha was in attendance, that Mary came in, bringing an alabaster vial of the costly essence; and with words perhaps, or gestures, not left on record, but expressive of the adoration which prompted such an act of homage, lavished the precious liquid upon the head and feet of the Redeemer, in such wise that the whole house is filled with the odour of the perfume.

I. If when Iscariot interposed his odious, untimely, detestable and incongruous question, taking the name of the sacred poor in vain, "Why was this waste made? why was not all this bestowed upon the poor?" If some prophetic lip then present had been severe enough, it might have answered, "This waste was made because Christ chose to make Himself the friend, the advocate and the representative of the poor;" and the more a man truly worships Christ, the more certainly he must regard the poor—with the least, most suffering of whom the Saviour has identified Himself. This waste was made, like the waste of seed-corn in the parable, that it might die and spring up again an hundredfold. If Judas had been capable of appreciating that act of worship by Mary, he might have gone down to his grave in peace, and lived in sacred history, an honoured and a sainted man.

II. It well deserves remark that the two occasions upon which our Lord expressed Himself with the most lavish approbation, were both of them essentially acts of worship and nothing but worship, unmixed with any utilitarian element, with anything of a directly and materially useful tendency; both of them actions of self-sacrifice, one to the personal honour of our Lord, the other to the maintenance of temple ceremonies; one was the gift of the perfume, the other was the poor widow's gift of the two mites which make a farthing; but both alike enjoyed the unstinted praise of the Redeemer. Strange to think that now, when for eighteen centuries the fragrance of that perfume has evaporated, and its component particles been dissipated and blown hither and thither in the atmosphere, and while those two mites have corroded utterly away and rejoined the primal elements of nature, the memory of these two women survives, and will survive for ever while the Gospel lives, as the representatives, one of profuse, the other of indigent liberality, but both by force of example the instigators of immeasurable, incalculable beneficence, simply from having done what they could.

W. H. BROOKFIELD, *Sermons*, p. 158.

REFERENCES: xiv. 3.—R. M. McCheyne, *Memoir and Remains*,

p. 407. xiv. 3-9.—W. Hubbard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 282; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 1; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, p. 340; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 300; T. de Witt Talmage, *Old Wells Dug Out*, p. 36.

Chap. xiv., vers. 4-6.

WHEREVER anything of the love of God exists there must be a desire to sacrifice some considerable portion of our worldly goods to Him; and the most ordinary way of doing so is by giving to the poor, in whom Christ has promised that He Himself shall be found, and that He will consider such gifts as given to Himself.

I. But then the question arises, Will this be acceptable to Him? He loves a spiritual worship and the care of the poor, but does He love also external and outward signs of our love and reverence? To this, I think, we shall find a most satisfactory answer in that most interesting incident which is recorded of the good Mary pouring the precious ointment on our blessed Saviour's feet, and His most gracious acceptance of it. Why was this good deed so exceedingly pleasing to Christ and honoured by Him? It was not that He who, in every sense, loved poverty cared for such things. What was the precious ointment to Him who is the Maker and Preserver of all things? It was because it was the manner in which love to Him was shown. She did what she could; she had been at what was to her great cost, because she loved much.

II. The Almighty has so appointed it that the true service of Him is the best cure for the diseases of our sick souls; to pray to Him, to praise Him, to worship, is the medicine of our hearts. Now the disease with which this country is sick to the very heart is the love of money. A nation hurrying to and fro with the love of mammon, so as to be the very spring of life to it, as the heart is to the body, this would lead one to fear that God is preparing for judgment. What, then, is the cure for all this? Why, surely, to make ourselves friends of the unrighteous mammon, that when God visits us we may be received into everlasting habitations. Unless persons are disposed to make far greater sacrifices to Almighty God, than Christians now usually are, their religion must be something very different from what Christianity used to be. Let every one do something; do not hide under a stone, and hoard up for the moth and rust; do not spend what you have on your own pride and comfort, but be content with that most blessed and good Mary to be

accounted a fool in this world, that, at any cost, you may win Christ.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. x., p. 98.

REFERENCES: xiv. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1,834; *Ibid.*, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. 27; p. 254.

Chap. xiv., ver. 8.

ON doing what we can.

Nobody is idle in the kingdom of our Lord. Even the babes and sucklings have something to do. But so just is the King that He will not have any of His servants do more than they can. He expects us to do only what we can.

It was this which pleased Him so well in the service which Mary of Bethany did; she did what she could. She greatly loved the Lord, He had often spoken to her about His Father; He had raised her brother Lazarus from the dead. And she wanted to show her love. To look at, her act was not so much as if she had built a church, or a school, or a hospital. It was only pouring some sweet perfume on the head and feet of the Saviour she loved. But this was just the thing she could best do, and what she could she did.

II. When years had gone past and Jesus was gone back to heaven, many other disciples showed their love to Him by doing what they could. Some sold their possessions and gave the money they got for them to the poor. Some went about the world preaching Jesus. Some opened their houses to receive the preachers. Some spent hours in prayer, asking God to bless the preaching. Some, more noble than others, searched the Bible besides, to know what God would have them to do.

III. Sometimes we can only sing a psalm, or offer a prayer, or speak a kind word, or give a tender look, or a warm grasp of the hand. It is enough in the eyes of the just Saviour that we do things as little as these, if these should be the only things we can do.

IV. No one is so humble, or poor, or weak as not to be able to do something. Even a child may serve the Lord. It is wonderful how much can be done, and what things great in God's sight, if people would only do the little things they can.

A. MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 47.

I. IT is allowable for women openly to show their attachment to Christ and His cause. Many modes of influence and useful-

ness are open to them, just as, in the sacred history we find in many ways, both in the lifetime of our Lord and afterwards, the agency of woman was permitted or required. As in early times, she was to be honourably distinguished who was well reported of for good works, in that she had washed the saints' feet, or been actively hospitable to missionaries and ministers—so in the present day there is still opportunity for the thoughtful kindness of woman's calling, in relation to those, or to their families and their representatives, who, at home or abroad, are devoted to and are doing the work of God.

II. Women may sometimes show their regard for Christ in a way very startling to others—not approved by them—and that may be thought extravagant or wrong. Whenever there is very deep, strong, and impulsive religious feeling—the notion that the ideal of the Christian mind ought to be embodied in facts and actions—the chances are that something will be projected, attempted, or done, which the Church generally will not go along with. The penitent may be repelled by the self-righteous, the munificent libelled by the churl—nobody can please all; while high, unwonted forms of action will run the risk of displeasing most.

III. The act, that may be thus misunderstood, may be acceptable to, approved, and honoured by Christ. In the case before us Mary obtained a double reward: (1) She found that she had done a thing far greater than she intended, she had anointed His body for the burial; (2) Jesus said that her action should be talked of, written about, read everywhere the world over—always, while there is a Gospel to be preached or men to hear it.

IV. This misapprehension on the part of some, this approval of Christ and predicted reward of Mary's service, all sprang from her having done what she could. She put her whole ability to tribute or rather to the test, and resolved to do all and everything it was capable of effecting. She devised liberal things, she purposed in her heart, planned with her head, put to her hand, pushed on, persevered, prayed and toiled day by day, exerting the utmost of her power, that she might accomplish all that was in her will, and she has done it. Gabriel could do no more, nor any of the highest creatures of God.

T. BINNEY, *King's Weigh-House Chapel Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 188.

NOTICE:—I. The costliness of this offering. A contemporary writer, complaining of the luxury and wastefulness of his age

specifies the extravagant prices paid for unguents in proof of his assertion; and then mentions four hundred pence as a proof of the recklessness of the rich. Here, then, was a woman—not rich certainly—possessing herself of the costliest offering she could procure. As nearly as one could reckon the sum she paid for it would be about thirty pounds—according to the present value of money among ourselves. And I think we shall all admit that although the sum is not what a rich person would call a large one, it is what we should call a very noble offering indeed, if offered by a person in humble life, especially if offered in this particular way. I mean offered without any particular, immediate, visible, commensurate object. She was not buying a burial-place for her Lord's body, or providing for His embalming, or for His entombment; or doing any other similar necessary and abiding act. No; she merely wanted to show her love, her soul's devotion, the largeness of her affectionate reverence towards that mysterious Being whose discourse was sweeter to her than honey or the honey-comb—whose strong voice had broken the gates of death; in whom she recognised the Author of all her purest joy. She pours the costly unguent on His sacred head, and spreads what she lets fall upon His feet with her hair. And she earns for herself thereby the praise of the eternal God and a place in the everlasting Gospel of Christ.

II. The commendation which our Savour bestowed upon the act of this pious woman is very striking; for who was ever modest, self-denying, humble-minded, regardless of luxury, pomp, and worldly honours, if not our Saviour, the meek, lowly-hearted One who proposes Himself in this very respect as a model to us all? And yet, it is He who commends so highly Mary's costly offering now; for our sakes He did it, and it is to show us that He approves, and will to the end of time approve, all similar ventures of faith and love. These words of Christ are the commendation, the eternal praise, of lavish outlay and costly expenditure made for Christ's sake and in Christ's honour; It is the praise won by every one of whom that may be truly said which was once spoken of Mary: "She hath done what she could."

J. W. BURGON, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, No. 36.

THE Insight of Love.

Note:—I. The inherent difficulty which besets all questions of casuistry that rise under the laws or precepts of natural morality. The rules or precepts of morality are easy for the most part; it

is only their application to particular cases that are difficult. Thus, if the woman had been asking how she could use her box of ointment so as to do most good with it, she would either have fallen into utter doubt and perplexity, or else she would have taken up the same conclusion with Judas, and given it to the benefit of the poor. However perfect and simple the code of preceptive duty the applications of it will often be difficult and sometimes well-nigh impossible, without some better help than casuistry.

II. This better help is contributed by Christ and His Gospel. Begetting in the soul a new personal love to Himself, Christ establishes in it all law, and makes it gravitate, by its own sacred motion, towards all that is right and good in particular cases. This love will find all good by its own pure affinity apart from any mere debate of reasons, even as a magnet finds all specks of iron hidden in the common dust. Thus, if the race were standing fast in love, perfect love, that love would be the fulfilling of the law without the law, determining itself rightly by its own blessed motions, without any statutory control whatever. The wise male brethren who stood critics round this woman had all the casuistic, humanly assignable reasons plainly enough with them. And yet the wisdom is hers without any reasons. She reaches farther, touches the proprieties more fully, chimes with God's future more exactly than they do, reasoning the question as they best can. It is as if she were somehow polarised in her love by a new Divine force, and she settles into coincidence with Christ and His future, just as the needle settles to its point without knowing why. To bathe His blessed head with the most precious ointment she can get, and bending low to put her fragrant homage on his feet, and bind them in the honours of her hair, is all that she thinks of; and be it wise or unwise it is done. By a certain delicate affinity of feeling, that was equal to insight, and almost to prophecy, she touches exactly her Lord's strange unknown future, and anoints Him for the kingdom and the death she does not even think of or know. Plainly enough no debate of consequence could ever have prepared her for these deep and beautifully wise proprieties.

H. BUSHNELL, *Christ and His Salvation*, p. 39.

REFERENCES: xiv. 8.—J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 58; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 218; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, p. 252; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 107; *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 37; *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 265. xiv. 8, 9.—*Good Words*, vol. ii., p. 416.

Chap. xiv., ver. 9 (R.V.).—"**And verily I say unto you, wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.**"

Love to the Christ as a Person.

I. Looking at this incident closely, we find as its main characteristic that it was the expression of a feeling, and that it was intensely personal. This woman had come under a great sense of gratitude to Christ. He had become enshrined in her soul almost as God; nay, all her thoughts of Him were like her thoughts of God, except that their dread was softened by a human grace. It is not true, it is not an idea, that inspires her, but this Jesus Himself; and so upon Jesus Himself she lavishes her tribute of reverent love.

II. But this is a gospel to be preached in all the world; how shall it preach to us? We have no seen and present Lord to receive the raptures and gifts of our love. The outward parallel is not for us, but the inward parallel sets forth an unending relation and an unfaltering duty. Christ asked from men nothing of an external nature, but He steadily required their personal love and loyalty. He did not ask of any a place to lay His head, it mattered little if Simon asked Him to his feasts, but once there, it did matter whether Simon loved Him or not. Waiving all personal ministration, He yet claims personal love.

III. Let us see if Christ was mistaken in planting His system upon personal love and devotion to Himself. Or, more broadly, Why does this faith, that claims to be the world's salvation, wear this guise of personal relations? Simply because in no other way can man be delivered from his evil. In the ideas that the loud-voiced wisdom of the age would have us believe to be the salvation of the world, God is driven farther and farther into unknowable heavens, the Christ is made to figure only on a dim and blurred page of history. The Faith that is to redeem the world must have a surer method, it must have a vitalising motive, and such a motive can proceed only from a person using the strongest force in a person—love. The love we now render is the fidelity of our whole nature, the verdict of our intelligence, the assent of our conscience, the allegiance of our will, the loyalty of sympathetic conviction all-permeated with tender gratitude; but it is still personal, loving Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

T. T. Munger, *The Freedom of Faith*, p. 109.

I. One lesson of this incident is, that we should not grudge any outlay where God and His glory are concerned; that we should be on our guard against a captious, withholding temper; against that temper which the disciples showed in their remark upon Mary's offering: "Why was this waste of the ointment made?"

II. Note the sense which Christ Himself entertains of such acts of devotion: "She hath wrought a good work on Me," etc. This, remember, is not the judgment of man. It is Christ's own view of an act which His disciples blamed as extravagant. He pronounces it a good act, and He declares the praise of it shall endure. And His words on this subject reach even to us. What He spoke of Mary's homage, He speaks—doubt it not—of all like generous free-giving in all after times. To such conduct He awards an everlasting memorial, a remembrance of the doers when they are dead, living on, age after age, in the hearts and on the lips, of their fellow-men. A life that never goes beyond the level of common practice, that is never quickened by any effort of unusual charity, or unusual self-denial; a life that even in its religion is a selfish life, that seeks its own and not the things which are Jesus Christ's, that knows nothing of His constraining love, that never contemplates the giving up of field, or house, or ease, or pleasure, or natural inclination, or party views, the better to advance His cause in the world; such a life is not, surely, the life that we can be content to lead. Certainly it is not the life exhibited for our pattern in the Gospel. It may be that the utmost we can accomplish will be small; it may be that our poor efforts to serve the Lord Christ will show as nothing, compared with what some of our kind have wrought; but this need not dishearten us. If we have done our best, "what we could," we shall have the seal of His approval; we shall have been faithful in our few things; and that fidelity—we have His word for it—will gain for us admission into the joy of our Lord.

R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Sermons preached in Country Churches*, p. 95.

References: xiv. 12.—A. Rowland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 3. xiv. 12-21.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 300. xiv. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 785; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 315. xiv. 17-21.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 371; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 429. xiv. 19.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 163.

Chap. xiv., ver. 21.—"Good were it for that man if he had never been born."

I. When we consider by whom these words were spoken, and when we also think steadily of what is contained in them, they are, I think, altogether one of the most solemn passages to be found in the whole of the Scriptures. For they declare of an immortal being that it would have been good for him if he had never been born. Now consider what immortality is, and it will be plain that if it were good for a man that his never-ending being should never have been begun, it can only be because it will be to him a being of never-ending misery. For, let the misery last ever so long, yet if it has any end at all, the eternity of happy existence which follows that end must make it not bad, but infinitely good, for us to have been born. Thousands on thousands of years of suffering, if that suffering is to end at last, must be infinitely less to an immortal being, infinitely more vain, infinitely more like a dream at waking, than one single second of suffering compared to threescore years and ten of perfect happiness.

II. There is no occasion to dwell on the particular sin of him of whom the words in the text were spoken; for we know that except we repent we shall all likewise perish. The state on which this fearful doom was pronounced was the state of one who, with many opportunities long offered to him, had neglected all; who had brought himself to that condition that he might despair, but could not repent. Now, if this condition were wholly ours, then it were vain to speak of it; if we had so long and so obstinately hardened our hearts that there was no place for repentance; then, indeed, we might sit down and cross our arms as helplessly as the boatman, when he feels himself within the sure indraught of the cataract and that no human aid can save him from being swept down the fearful gulf. But if the boat be not so surely within the grasp of the current; if yet, though it be fast hurrying downwards, it may by a vehement effort be rescued; if the shore of certain safety be not only near, but by possibility accessible; who cannot conceive the energy with which we should struggle under such circumstances?—who cannot feel of what intense efforts we would then be capable, when on the issue of a few moments of greater or less exertion, life or death were hanging?

T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 149.

Reference: xiv. 21.—G. E. L. Cotton, *Sermons and Addresses in Marlborough College*, p. 497.

Chap. xiv., vers. 22-5.—"And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is My body," etc.

CHRIST and the Communion.

I. This service carries us back over dim tracks of time to the beginning of the Gospel. We think of scattered bands of our ancient brethren, in the midst of surrounding heathenism, gathering as we do now around the Table of our Lord. They regard the crucified Jesus as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. It is not altogether difficult to place ourselves in the position of those ancient saints, and to enter into their state of heart as they gathered round the Lord's Table. There was an unconscious recognition—all the more profound and joyful that it was unconscious—of their being one through the love that embraced them all. It was not, however, that their minds were occupied about one another. It was the Lord Himself whom they thought upon; His holy form it was that rose up before the eye of faith; the festival was one of love, and memory, and hope, bringing up to faith the sacred Person of the Lord, and kindling all blissful emotions. In such experiences believing men may share to-day, to the same extent as believing men of the first century.

II. What is this communion to our Saviour? What was in His heart when He established this ordinance? The answer rises to our lips at once. (1) There was undying love to His own. That love is the abiding mystery of the Gospel. Never before did it get such utterance; never before did it appear so tender and intense, so full and overflowing. (2) There is another thing beyond even this. It tells out His desire for fellowship with His own—just as when He took Peter and James and John with Him into the garden, and said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with Me." There is unfathomable mystery here—that He, so to speak, should lean on us, but it is part of the blessed mystery of His brotherhood. Brotherhood is no mere name with Him; but a blissful verity. In all, save sin, His heart was like our own; and just as we have pleasure in the love that our friends bear toward us, and in knowing that we live in their memory, so does He delight in the love with which saved men love Him. It is part of the reward of His sorrows, part of the joy that was set before Him, for which He endured the Cross, despising the shame.

J. CULROSS, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 245.

REFERENCES: xiv. 22, 23.—*Sermons on the Catechism*, p. 252.

xiv. 22-4.—R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. i., p. 186; J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 9th series, p. 180. xiv. 22-5.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 359; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 306; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 439. xiv. 23.—J. H. Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 312. xiv. 23-34.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 224. xiv. 25.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 250. xiv. 26-30.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. ii., p. 132. xiv. 26-31.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 313. xiv. 27.—*Homilist*, new series, vol. ii., p. 109. xiv. 27-30.—W. H. Jellie, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 296. xiv. 29-31.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of The Twelve*, p. 393.

Chap. xiv., ver. 31.—"But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise."

Religious Emotion.

To mistake mere transient emotion, or mere good thoughts, for obedience, is a far commoner deceit than at first sight appears. How many a man is there, who, when his conscience upbraids him for neglect of duty, comforts himself with the reflection that he has never treated the subject of religion with open scorn—that he has from time to time had serious thoughts—that he has had, accidentally, some serious conversation with a friend? No one, it is plain, can be religious without having his heart in his religion; his affections must be actively engaged in it; and it is the aim of all Christian instruction to promote this. But, if so, doubtless there is great danger lest a perverse use should be made of the affections. In proportion as a religious duty is difficult, so is it open to abuse. Doubtless it is no sin to feel at times passionately on the subject of religion; it is natural in some men, and under certain circumstances it is praiseworthy in others. But these are accidents. As a general rule, the more religious men become, the calmer they become; and at all times, the religious principle viewed by itself, is calm, sober, and deliberate.

I. The natural tempers of men vary very much. Some men have ardent imaginations, and strong feelings; and adopt, as a matter of course, a vehement mode of expressing themselves. Such men may, of course, possess deep-rooted principle. All I would maintain is, that their ardour does not of itself make their faith deeper and more genuine, and that they must not think themselves better than others on account of it.

II. Next, there are, besides, particular occasions on which excited feeling is natural, and even commendable; yet not for its own sake, but on account of the peculiar circumstances under which it occurs. For instance, it is natural for a man to

feel especial remorse at the thought of his sins, when he first begins to think of religion; he ought to feel bitter sorrow and keen repentance. But all such emotion is evidently not the highest state of a Christian's mind; it is but the first stirring of grace in him.

III. And further, the accidents of life will occasionally agitate us:—affliction and pain; bad news; though here, too, the Psalmist describes the higher excellence of the mind, namely, the calm confidence of the believer, who will "not be afraid of any evil thing, for his heart standeth fast, and believeth in the Lord." The highest Christian temper is free from all vehement and tumultuous feeling.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i., p. 177.

REFERENCES: xiv. 31.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 235. xiv. 32.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 80; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 242. xiv. 32-42.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 447; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 318; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 70. xiv. 36.—A. Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, p. 216. xiv. 37.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, No. 17; A. Maclaren, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 40. xiv. 38.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 93. xiv. 41, 42.—F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 284. xiv. 43, 44.—J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 409. xiv. 43-52.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 323; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 458.

Chap. xiv., ver. 46.—"And they laid their hands on Him, and took Him."

INCIDENTS of our Lord's Arrest.

Note:—I. The Arrival upon the scene of Judas and his companions. His very name has often come to the memory like a shock. When the soldiers, under his direction, not knowing Jesus, asked him for some sign by which He might be distinguished, he said, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; hold Him fast." Of all preconcerted signals possible, this was the one selected; as if to show what sin has in it, and what sin can do; as if to show its impudence, its brass, its black ingratitude, its hell-fire. In Judas the sin of humanity culminates; in him sin reaches its high fever of crime; and if it had not been for him we should not have known the depth of degradation to which through sin the soul can sink.

II. The Panic. The Lord, clothed though He was in the garment of mortality, was still the Lord. Arrest Him, Judas and your company; place Him at the bar; nail Him on a cross. Not without His will. His object is not to strike you back

blasted; this is but a thrill from His life, a momentary play of His latent Omnipotence; though it shakes you down flat—it is a touch, merely—just as a commentary on, in confirmation of His own royal word: "No man taketh My life from Me;" and just to show that if arrested, it is not in consequence of your mastery, but by the permission of His own will.

III. The Capture. The kiss of Judas removed whatever awe might have stricken the soldiers, and whatever reluctance they might have felt to going on with their task. They instantly laid their hands on Him who had been thus indicated, and began to bind Him in their own merciless fashion.

IV. The Great Forsaking "Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled." He who forsakes Christ forsakes perfection. It was not out of calm, set, deliberate purpose that they forsook their Lord. They were in a brief madness, and knew not what they did. Their souls were suddenly stormed, and the strength by which they had hitherto been kept was for the moment, and for their eventual good, withdrawn. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

C. STANFORD, *Evening of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 191.

REFERENCES: xiv. 50-2.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 469. xiv. 53-65.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 334. xiv. 54-72.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 469.

Chap. xiv., vers. 63, 64.—**"Then the High Priest rent his clothes, and said, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye?"**

THE Godhead of Christ.

I. On a certain most important occasion, Christ Himself asserted His Godhead in a manner which could not possibly be misunderstood. He allowed Himself to be put to death on a charge of blasphemy. At a most solemn juncture, and under the most solemn circumstances, He accepted a title, the acceptance of which, as He well knew, would be considered and treated as blasphemous. The conclusion is inevitable. If Christ be God, the whole procedure is in accordance with the facts of the case, and with the position He assumed. If Christ be not God, I must leave you to form your own opinion of His character.

II. A denial of the Godhead of Christ involves consequences from which we should most of us shrink—consequences which affect the nature and the character of Deity itself. (1) On the

supposition that Christ was a mere man, or a created being, who allied himself with human nature, the further supposition becomes inevitable, that in the bygone eternity God dwelt in a lonely and uncompanionable isolation. (2) The denial of the Godhead of Christ limits and impairs the Divine capability of manifesting love to man. If Jesus Christ were just a perfect man, and not the eternal Son of the Father, what did it cost God to part with Him? nothing, that I can see. The self-sacrifice consisted in the surrender of His Son. (3) If Christ be not God, I cannot avoid the inference that God has done everything in His power to transfer my affection from the Creator to the creature. I read in the Bible that God is a jealous God; and that the honour which is His own He will not permit to be given to another; and what has He done? In those Scriptures, which are the revelation of His mind and will, He has taken all the grand titles which belong to Himself, and has laid them upon Christ. Everything is done to make the tendrils of my human affection twine round Jesus Christ. The heart must be chilled towards God, which does not recognise in Jesus Christ the eternal Son of the eternal Father.

G. CALTHROP, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 798.

REFERENCES: xiv. 64.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1,643. xiv. 67.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, p. 219. xiv. 67-72.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, pp. 469, 489; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 338. xiv. 72.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 83; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 212. xv. 1.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 485; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 343. xv. 2 5. *Ibid*, p. 349. xv. 15.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 150. xv. 15-20.—Beecher, *Sermons*, 1870, p. 104. xv. 17.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 200; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. i., p. 266. xv. 17, 18.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 224. xv. 20.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 232. xv. 20, 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1,683.

Chap. xv., ver. 21.—**"And they compel one Simon, a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His cross."**

How little these people knew that they were making this man immortal. What a strange fate that is which has befallen those persons in the Gospel narratives, who, for an instant, come into contact with Jesus Christ. Like ships passing athwart the white ghostlike splendour of the moonlight on the sea; they

gleam silvery pure for a moment, as they cross its broad belt, and then are swallowed up again in the darkness.

Consider some of the lessons that arise from this incident:—

I. The greatness of trifles. If that man had started from the little village where he lived five minutes earlier or later, if he had walked a little faster or slower, if he had happened to be lodging on the other side of Jerusalem, or if the whim had taken him to go in at another gate—then all his life would have been different.

II. Note, further, the blessedness and honour of helping Jesus Christ. Though changed in form very truly and really, in substance this blessedness and honour of helping Jesus Christ is given to us; and is demanded from us, too, if we are His disciples. He is despised and set at nought still, He is crucified afresh still. Let us go forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach—the tail end of the Cross. It is the lightest. He has borne the heaviest end on His own shoulders; but we have to ally ourselves with that suffering and despised Christ, if we are to be His disciples.

III. Another lesson which may be drawn from this story is, that of the perpetual recompense and record of the humblest Christian work. Surely the most blessed share in that day's tragedy was reserved for Simon, whose bearing of the Cross may have been compulsory at first, but became, ere it was ended, willing service. But whatever were the degrees of recognition of Christ's character, and of sympathy with the meaning of His sufferings, yet the smallest and most transient impulse of loving gratitude that went out towards Him was rewarded then, and is rewarded for ever, by blessed results in the heart that feels it.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 2nd series, p. 45.

BEARING the Cross.

Cross-bearing means now a spiritual action. The only cross in prospect now is a cross for the soul. Such a spiritualisation of the word "cross" began in the teaching of Jesus Christ. In several instances, He said, in various ways, "If a man become My disciple, let him take up his cross and follow Me."

I. Carrying a cross after Christ means, for one thing, enduring suffering for Christ. "Cross" was the name once given to the most fearful engine of agony for the body; and the words "cross," "crucial," "excruciate," and similar words, have come into our language from that material cross; and they

now point, in a general way, to what has now to be suffered, not in the body, but in the soul.

II. To carry a cross for Christ means: To have a great weight on the mind for Christ's sake. To carry a cross for Christ means that this suffering and heavily weighted condition should be open, not secret; for the cross-bearer is seen.

III. It means: That the man who is willing to carry the cross for Christ is willing to suffer scorn for Christ. No one carried a cross in the old Roman days but one who was the very refuse of society. To be willing to carry a cross for Christ means willingness to suffer ignominy, willingness to go forth without the camp, bearing His reproach.

IV. View the cross-bearing as something practical in distinction from something only emotional, and answer the question: Who is now willing to become a cross-bearer for Christ? There is much that is called religion that is only useless emotion, and that only belongs to a character that is not made of stuff stern enough to carry crosses. Christ said to the weeping daughters of Jerusalem, as they stood by the *via dolorosa:* "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves."

V. In view of the principle that nothing is accepted by Christ but willingness, I ask: Who is willing this day to become a cross-bearer? Jesus Christ will not have you against your will: if you carry His Cross you must be willing.

VI. In view of the strength Christ gave for this, I ask, Who is willing? As your day your strength will be. Mark the footsteps that are on the road before you. Every cross-bearer found it so. So you will find it.

C. STANFORD, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 282.

REFERENCES: xv. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1,853; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 73.

Chap. xv., ver. 23.—"They gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not."

CHRIST refusing any Alleviation of His Sufferings.

Standing before the scene these words picture, I would ask, devoutly and earnestly: What does it mean? What light does it shed upon Christ? What help does it render us in life? I think it illustrates:—

I. The source of the moral majesty of the Son of Man. In this brief occurrence I read at once the greatness, and the origin, of that majestic character which raises Jesus so immeasurably above all others of the sons of men. He refused to

receive a balm for His agony; in that He exhibited a moral strength utterly unparalleled, and in that very refusal we learn from whence His strength came. He received not His strength from man, and from the relief man offered Him He turned away; He received His might from God, and the secret of that might lay in perfect submission to His will.

II. What was the meaning of the consummation of Christ's sufferings? It has been truly remarked that He drank the last drop of His cup of agony by refusing that which would alleviate its final pangs. We have said that He did not do that for the mere sake of enduring, but in surrender to the will of Heaven. The question comes, What means that will? Christ died, not to reconcile God, nor yet to compensate for so much evil; but to restore the loving spirit of man to the eternal Father. For that restoration two things were requisite; man must learn the majesty of God's law; and he must be drawn by love to the Divine One. Both these receive glorious illustration from the words before us.

III. We learn, too, from this history, the clearness of Christ's vision of death. He resolved to die with His mental vision clear and calm. In full self-possession He went to face death's horror. There is a deep significance in this, in relation to the manner in which Christ conquered death for every man.

IV. The duty of Christ's disciples. When suffering meets us in the path of obedience, we must not shrink back from its approach; but, trusting in Christ's strength, calmly, resolutely, fearlessly face it.

E. L. HULL, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 213.

REFERENCES: xv. 23.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 233. xv. 23-32.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 366.

Chap. xv., vers. 24-41.

WHAT took place around the Cross of Christ.

I. Notice what *men* did during the crucifixion of Christ. (1) The soldiers. They are careless and confident. They cast lots for the clothes of the Lord. Their thoughts are all for this world. So many among ourselves know well the Lord's mantle, and have it in their hands—namely, His Word and Sacraments, the means of salvation which the Church offers. But the use they make of it is thoughtless and careless. (2) The crowd of Jews. They pass by mocking and shaking their heads; some from malice, others from ignorance and a darkened mind. Many pass the Cross merely as spectators—

as if it were possible for any of us to be no more than a spectator of it. We shake our heads doubtfully, we understand the Lord's words imperfectly or wrongly, and then we complain that they are foolishness. (3) The little group of friends. They stood afar off, beholding—partly from fear of the Jews—partly from fear of the heartrending sorrow of a near approach. So with us. But the nearer to the Cross the richer the blessing. This is well illustrated in the case of the penitent thief.

II. Notice what God did during the crucifixion of Christ. (1) He darkened the sun and made an earthquake. Such phenomena occur also when the Crucified comes near to our spirits, if only we could see them. The life of the senses—formerly so joyous—now loses its charm. We guess then what powers of darkness have been carrying on their work in us. We feel that the decisive hour has come, when light or darkness must win the day. The pillars of our being shake; we feel something beforehand of the day of judgment. (2) The veil of the Temple was rent in twain. On that day heaven and earth were rolled up like worn-out garments, and a new creation began. The way into the holiest of all was opened in the hour that Jesus died. (3) The graves were opened. Thus God showed that the new creation was to be that creation of resurrection and of life for which all saints in the former dispensation had waited. In the hour when Christ comes to us we have this witness also. We feel the dawn of a new day arise, a new life of love and of knowledge. This feeling may pass away, but yet it is like the first coming of spring to our souls; we see the dawn of own resurrection day appear.

R. ROTHE, *Nachgelassene Predigten*, vol. ii., p. 81.

Chap. xv., ver. 31.—"He saved others; Himself He cannot save."

IN this text a truth is spoken, but it is a truth which the speakers do not know. By this word the railers meant to mock the pretensions of Jesus; by it the Spirit in the Scriptures declares the glory of God in the Gospel of His Son. Like Balaam, these false prophets intended to curse, but their lips were overruled, and framed to express the distinguishing feature of redemption.

I. What the Jewish leaders understood and intended to say is obvious at a glance. They see their Enemy at last in extremities. Now that they have compassed the object of their desire; now that they see Him ready to expire on the Cross,

they cannot contain themselves. They must give vent to their exultation. They must triumph over their victory. "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." When they see Him dying, they deem the sight a proof of His weakness. They think that if He had saved others, He would also have saved Himself; and they flourish the fact of His yielding to death as a proof that His miracles had been impostures.

II. This word may be read in two ways. The one is darkness, the other light. The one is a lie, the other is the truth; the truth on which the saving of the lost depends. The leaders read it thus: "We see He does not save Himself from death, and thence we infer that He has not power; and whatever appearances may be, He cannot have saved others." The meaning which, under direction of the Spirit, the word of the Scriptures contains for us is, He saved others, as their covenant Substitute, and therefore He cannot also save Himself from the obligation which He undertook as Mediator. He saved others, and therefore Himself He cannot save. His life has been pledged for the life of His people forfeited; they have obtained their life eternal, and therefore His life, so pledged, cannot be saved. If He had saved Himself from humiliation and suffering, we could not have been saved. If the Son of God had treated the world when it fell as the priest and the Levite treated the man who fell among thieves; if He had looked on us and passed by on the other side—we should have all perished in our sins.

W. ARNOT, *The Anchor of the Soul*, p. 229.

REFERENCES: xv. 33.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 1869, p. 172; B. F. Westcott, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 457. xv. 33-8.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 371. xv. 34.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. xii., p. 374.

Chap. xv., vers. 37, 38.—**"And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."**

TRUTHS taught by the Rending of the Veil.

I. If you look into the account of the arrangements and furniture of the Jewish Temple, you will find that there were two veils: the one at the entrance into the holy place; the other between the holy place or the sanctuary, and the holy of holies. The second veil is always considered to have been that which was rent in twain at the death of our Lord; so that the first thing done through the rending was the throwing open that heretofore invisible and inaccessible place, the holy of

holies. As the rent rocks and open graves proclaimed Christ victorious in death, so may the riven veil have declared that He had won for Himself an access into heavenly places, there to perpetuate the work which had been wrought out on Calvary.

II. And there are other intimations which may, perhaps, have been conveyed by the occurrence in question. It is possible, for example, that the abolition of the Mosaic economy was hereby figuratively taught. Christ had come to destroy the law, but only that He might substitute for it a better covenant.

III. The rent veil signifies that through Christ alone we have access to the Father, and that supplies of heavenly things may be expected to descend. The privilege of prayer, the privilege of intercourse with our heavenly Father, has been procured for us exclusively by Christ.

IV. Neither was it only the privilege of access to God while we yet dwell on the earth, which was set forth under the figure of the rent veil of the Temple. I read higher things; I see a title to a heavenly inheritance. It is like an opening in the firmament, through which the eye of faith may gaze on the diadem and the palm which are in store for the faithful. What was to occur after death and the resurrection? The rent veil gives the answer. As the opened graves published the great truth of the abolition of death, so did the riven veil publish that of our being begotten again to an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." The veil is rent to show that the Mediator hath made for Himself a passage into heaven, but in nothing does He act for Himself alone. We rose with Him; we ascended with Him; and therefore is the rending of the veil as much a pledge of our admission as of His, who by the efficiency of His sacrifice provided for our not only being sons of God, but joint-heirs with Himself.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,500.

THE veil of the Temple was the curtain separating the holy place from the most holy; for Solomon's Temple, as the Tabernacle of Moses before it, was divided into two several parts or rooms, both holy, but one holier than the other. The veil or curtain itself was made of blue, purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work; it was adorned with images of cherubim, and was hung on four pillars, of some precious wood overlaid with gold.

I. What now is the veil, so drawn across as to separate the two kingdoms of God from one another, yet such as to give

hope that it may be one day entirely withdrawn, and the two made altogether one? St. Paul tells us in one word that the veil is the blessed body of our Lord Jesus Christ. For, says the Apostle, He hath provided for us a new and living way through the veil, that is, His flesh. The miraculous rending of the veil at the moment of the death of the Son of God, was a token of the rending of our Lord's blessed body, by the nails and spear, and of the violent parting of His soul and body for a while.

II. As the veil concealed from the eyes of the worshippers the most holy place made with hands, which was but a figure of the true, so the body of our Lord and Saviour was a kind of veil or shadow drawn over His most high Godhead, the open presence of which is that which makes heaven.

III. The veil being rent signifies pardon, through Christ's sacrificed body, for sins past; but it also signifies communion with Him, through the same body in time to come. The flesh of Jesus, then, His glorified body, offered by Himself as High Priest, is a new and living way, through which believers, baptized persons, drawing near from time to time, may with reverent boldness enter into the holy places; they are invited, exhorted, encouraged, to do so. The mystery of the spiritual or Divine life of a Christian, taught us by the figure of the veil of the Temple, is this: that the only true happiness is partaking of the Divine Nature, as St. Peter calls it—communion with God in the person of His Son; that the way to this Divine communion is communicating with Him, being made members of Him, as man, the Man Christ Jesus; and this must be through His blessed body, and this again through His Holy Sacrament.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. viii., p. 76.

REFERENCES: xv. 37, 38.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 139. xv. 38.—T. M. Herbert, *Sketches of Sermons*, p. 106. xv. 39-47.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 376. xv. 42-6.—W. H. Jellie, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 285; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xx., p. 141.

Chap. xv., ver. 43.—**"Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God."**

THE Sanhedrim of Jerusalem consisted of seventy members, of whom twenty-four were the heads of the Priesthood, twenty-four were heads of the tribes of Israel, representing the laity, and twenty-two were Scribes learned in the law. Joseph was no doubt one of the noble representatives of the people; and, as such shared, in the functions of government and was

conversant with those sacred Scriptures which formed the basis of the Jewish commonwealth.

I. Arimathea is thought to have been situated on the fertile plain of Sharon, where probably Joseph's property lay. He also possessed an estate in Jerusalem—possibly a house in the city—certainly a garden in the outskirts. Josephus tells that the Holy City was in those times thickly surrounded by groves and gardens; shady retreats in the heat from the crowded streets of the metropolis. Here, under the shades of trees and umbrageous shrubs, we may think of this honourable counsellor as refreshing his spirit in peaceful meditations by day and night, when his public duties permitted his repose. The garden was large enough to require a gardener, so we read in St. John; and in some retired portion of it, at the end, where the boundary rock rose from the soil, Joseph had excavated a new tomb for himself, in which he would lie down in his death-sleep, when the labours of life were ended. How little can he have dreamed that this tomb of his was to be consecrated by the descent of angels, and by the mighty power of God, in raising up, on the third day, the destroyed temple of the body of Him who should be God manifest in the flesh, who should make His life a sin offering, yet prolong His days by a marvellous resurrection!

II. Joseph was an honourable counsellor, but we are told by St. John that he was only a secret disciple of Jesus till the hour of His death. Like Nicodemus, the other rich man, who began with a nocturnal visit to the Son of God, he grew bolder when the crisis arrived. Timidity is the common sin and weakness of rich men in the upper classes. It requires heroic resolution to go against the superstitution and fanaticism of the upper mob of souls, whose opinion in spiritual matters is seldom of greater value than that of the lower. "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?" was regarded as a decisive argument against Jesus Christ by the common people, although, as in this case, the vulgar considerations which determine upper-class opinion in religion, are as ignoble as any which can sway the violence of their inferiors. Let us, then, honour to the world's end both Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus; their memories are as fragrant as the precious spices which they brought with fine linen for the entombment of their Lord. The courageous avowal of Truth in the hour of its crucifixion, deserves to be crowned along with Truth in the hour of its triumph. E. WHITE, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 162.

REFERENCES: xv. 43-46.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1,789.

xv. 46.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. xii., p. 140. xvi. 1-6.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 217. xvi. 1-8.—*Ibid.*, vol. xii., p. 209; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 381.

Chap. xvi., ver. 3.—"And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?"

I. In spite of the many warnings our Lord had given, that on the third day He would rise again, the last thing these women expected to find was an empty grave; and when they reported to the Apostles that they had so found it "their words seemed to them as idle tales." As little, at that time, would they have comprehended that the stone was not removed to let Him out who was the Almighty, Everliving God, as that it was removed in order to let them in, in order that their love might be rewarded by their being made the first witnesses of the Resurrection. "Who will roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" It was the question of weak faith and strong love—of a faith which was not in advance of that which prevailed around them, but of a love which would have removed mountains rather than not accomplish the work to which it had devoted itself.

II. To us there is no dimness. We stand in the fulness of light, and are called to walk as children of light. When our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the grave He deprived death for ever of that dreadful sting with which he can now wound none save those who wilfully remain in their sins, unrepentant and so unforgiven. He rolled away the door of our sepulchre when He rose triumphant from His own. All power is given Him in heaven and in earth. He will not fail us if we seek Him truly. "And this," saith He, "is the will of Him that sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. i., p. 168.

Consider:—

I. Who rolled away that stone. Who had right and authority to roll it away? I am not speaking now of mere physical power. Man was utterly incompetent, morally speaking, to roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and had he done it, it would have been useless. Had angels any authority or right to do it? They did it instrumentally, but was man responsible to angels? Were angels to decide

whether the work was done, whether Jesus had met every jot and tittle of the law's requirements, penalties, and precepts? Christ was not responsible to angels. He had nothing to do with them. He passed by the race of angels. Therefore angels were not competent. Was Christ competent Himself to roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? He said He had power to lay down His life, and power to raise Himself up again; but had He official power? No: He had not. He was not responsible to Himself; He did not come on His own account—He came on His Father's account: He was responsible to His Father. The Resurrection was of the Father, and the Ascension was of the Father; had the Father not been satisfied, the tomb had never been opened; and afterwards, had the Father not been satisfied by the righteousness of Chrits, heaven's gate had not been opened. The angel of the Lord, by the authority of the Father, rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre.

II. What followed in reference to the risen Christ, and in reference to His own people. (1) He came forth from the grave with power, the power of endless life, and the power of conferring that endless life. (2) Christ rose that you and I might rise. The Resurrection of Christ is a pledge to those who are believers and risen in heart, that all else should follow. As it is impossible that Christ, having accomplished the work of redemption, should not rise and dwell with the Father, so it is equally impossible that you and I, if we are believers in the Saviour, bound up with Him by living faith, should not ascend and be glorified pillars of that Temple by-and-by, to go out no more for ever.

C. MOLYNEUX, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, Nos. 296, 297.

Chap. xvi., vers. 3, 4.

THE facts of our religion—which, if supernatural is historical—are, when rightly appreciated, so many moral forces for the soul, incorporating ideas which give courage and gladness, and containing principles which are at the root of conduct and life. Pre-eminent among them is the event of the Resurrection, and I say faith in this event is the one and only force that adequately enables us to roll away the stones that encounter us in the struggles of life; and that what St. Paul calls the "power" of the Resurrection, is for all of us, not least for the young—who have their great opportunites, and untold possibilities in front

and unexhausted—the mighty secret of a steady triumph over temptation, difficulty, and sorrow.

I. The Resurrection is a power to heal conscience. Christ died; and if He had only died, while we should have been grateful for an unparalleled sacrifice, we should have mourned over its uselessness. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and in that Resurrection by the mighty hand of God we see His sacrifice accepted, and death tasted for every man; and peace ensured, and life eternal given. Sin on the conscience is one great stone which the Resurrection rolls away. Sin in the will is another. His grace helps us to hate what is evil, and to resist coarse and degrading instincts, and to practise self-control, and to carry the burdens of the weak, and to regard gifts and faculties as opportunities both of kindness and virtue.

II. The Resurrection is also a power to ennoble duty. In the light of the Resurrection life is seen to be worth living, for the stone of a purposeless and brief existence is rolled away; and with its new aims and responsibilities, and functions and motives, this life on earth has a new meaning and force. Now we may make ties, for death cannot dissolve them; now we may scatter the seeds of goodness, since we shall not be sowing them on the waves of a remorseless sea; now, as we rear our children, and win our friends, and grasp our duties, and pursue our studies, the chilling taunt does not come to mock us: "You are all of you but as the shadows on the mountain-side." Now we feel it worth while to try for humbleness and purity, for great tasks and meek virtues; for steady effort and patient love. All shall not be in vain; all shall have its sure and happy recompense if Jesus is Lord and Christ.

III. Again, the Resurrection is a power to explain death. Death is the one great fact that casts its ghastly shadow over the world, chilling youth, saddening age, and, like a black wall on the horizon, overshadowing for manhood the grand activities in front. But is it the end of our journey, or only a stage in it? The Resurrection shows us that death is only an event in life, not the abrupt closing of it. In the world to which we go there will be leisure enough in the great spaces of eternity to mellow and develop in that light, which needeth not the sun or moon to lighten it, the germs of thought and action which we sowed here; if there is no waste in the domain of nature, there is none in the sphere of spirit, and the continuity of eternal life, apparently interrupted by our physical dissolution,

shall be reunited and carried on under new conditions of perfection in the glory of the world to come.

IV. Once more, the Resurrection is a power to console sorrow. Have you observed that it was a "young man" whom the women beheld, sitting at the right hand in the tomb, and clothed in a white garment. Surely that gives the attractive and invigorating suggestion that the life to come will be a period of perpetual youth, with a grand enthusiasm which shall never be chilled by disappointment; youth, with time enough in front for perfecting its plans; youth, which no taint of corruption shall soil with the least stain of imperfection, and which in an ever-growing goodness shall have the image and fruition of God.

BISHOP THOROLD, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, May 6th, 1880.

REFERENCES: xvi. 3.—R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 63; J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, p. 175; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 231; G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines*, p. 303. xvi. 3, 4.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 268; vol. iv., p. 120; *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 41; Bishop Thorold, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 241.

Chap. xvi., ver. 5.—"And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment."

PERPETUAL YOUTH.

I. The life of the faithful dead is eternal progress towards infinite perfection. The life of man, being under the law of growth, is in all its parts subject to the consequent necessity of decline. But the perfect life of the dead in Christ has but one phase—youth. It is growth without a limit and without decline. To say that they are ever young is the same thing as to say that their being never reaches its climax, that it is ever but entering on its glory.

II. The life of the faithful dead recovers and retains the best characteristics of youth. The perfect man in the heavens will include the graces of childhood, the energies of youth, the steadfastness of manhood, the calmness of old age; as on some tropical tree, blooming on more fertile soil, and quickened by a nearer sun than ours, you may see at once bud, blossom, and fruit—the expectancy of spring, the maturing promise of summer, and the fulfilled fruition of autumn—hanging together on the unexhausted bough.

III. The faithful dead shall live in a body that cannot grow

old. The glorious and undecaying body shall then be the equal and fit instrument of the perfected spirit, not as it is now, the adequate instrument only of the natural life.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons preached in Manchester*, 2nd series, p. 190.

Chap. xvi., ver. 6.—"He is risen; He is not here."

THE Dead and their Future State.

The memory of the dead seems intended to serve as a kind of ladder for the living, whereon they may ascend from things seen to things unseen. As we grow older, and more imbued with the spirit of this world, it seems ordained that thoughts of death and the dead should grow proportionately stronger, so as to imbue us with the spirit of another world. As age brings us more and more within the danger of the infection of this world, death presses his keen antidote closer and closer to our lips.

I. Hopes concerning the dead are necessarily connected with opinions concerning the life after death; or, in other words, concerning the states commonly called heaven and hell. The great law of retribution upon which is based all the teaching of Christ is not to be violated, but to find its supreme fulfilment in the day of decision. Each man is to receive the things that he hath done in the flesh. What things we shall thus receive the senses cannot reveal to us. But if we confine ourselves to statements of probabilities, not about things but about the proportions of things, we seem to be within the province of sober reason.

II. Proceeding in this way we infer that it is improbable that the present diversity of human beings shall be hereafter merged in one monotonous identity. It seems more consistent with what we know of God's laws here, as well as with what we glean from the utterances of Christ Himself, to believe that the seeds sown below—instinct with choice natures from the first, and exposed to diverse influences of earth, and rain, and air, and sunshine—should not all blossom into the selfsame flowers, with every leaf and petal, every hue and streak, precisely similar. More likely that every present cause will be reproduced in some future effect. But, it may be urged, this continuity of cause and effect before and after death is a source of terror as well as of consolation. If we are to reap hereafter what we have sown here, how full of fear should be the harvest for many of us? Yes, this is a legitimate and

wholesome fear; and the present tendency to put aside, as unworthy and unreasonable, the belief in a future judgment and punishment has been caused, in part perhaps, by a misconception of the means of judging and punishing. For judgment is not the mere utterance of an arbitrary verdict backed by brute force. To judge is to separate between truth and falsehood, between righteousness and unrighteousness; and the ideal judgment is that verdict which is pronounced by the judge with such a force of correction that the offender himself anticipates its utterance and confesses its justice. Such judgments and such punishments as these, what sane man can pronounce irrational, or afford to laugh at even as possibilities? What? Because we no longer confuse metaphor with literalism, because we cease to apprehend tangible flames in a material pit, does it follow that God's laws of cause and effect are to be suspended? —that spiritual seed is to produce no spiritual fruit?—that sin shall cease to bring forth sorrow, and ill-doing to breed remorse? We blaspheme God when we degrade His just mercy into a weak connivance at imperfection, as if for the sake of a little family circle He would put a veto on His Divine law of retribution, and nullify the fundamental principles of redemption, for the purpose of giving a few select favourites a pass into Paradise. Not in the seventh heaven of heavens, not in the bottom-most abyss of hell, can we hope to escape from law, or banish the presence of love. But do law and love preclude punishment? And does punishment cease to be awful because it is spiritual? How weak and sterile must be that man's imagination who can realise none but material punishment, and has never learned to dread a spiritual hell!

III. It may seem a paradox to speak of the fear of hell as being hopeful; but yet it is certain that, if you give up all fear of the future, you will inevitably end in giving up all hope also. It is not right nor reasonable that you should expect for yourselves, or for the great majority of your infinitely diversified and imperfect fellow-creatures, that, when you die, you will all immediately be transmuted into one identical perfect image. If you expect this, you expect what is not just, and you form a conception of an unjust and undiscriminating God. But if your conception of God is thus lowered your faith in Him is lowered also; and thus all your hopes of eternal communion with Him become pallid and faint. If we may be permitted without irreverence to use that phrase, we might say that, for those who really love God as a Father, there can be no

hesitation in trusting both themselves and all the multitude of the human dead since the creation of the world to the uncovenanted mercies of God. And if, indeed, we have at any time realised, however faintly, but for one moment in our lives what it must be to be admitted into the circle of the eternal mercies, and into communion with the Everlasting Love, can it seem, even to the best and purest of us, other than the highest privilege—after long and various stages of waiting, and working, and suffering—at last, clinging like a child to the border of the garment of the Holy One of God, to be drawn in with Him into some inferior corner of the abode of the Presence, where one may sit down as it were upon sufferance, well pleased to catch a far-off glimpse of the splendour of the unapproachable throne?

E. ABBOTT, *Church of England Pulpit*, Nov. 1st, 1879.

THERE is a triumphant scorn, amounting almost to sarcasm, in the way in which that young man, sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment, addressed the three women that came early to the holy sepulchre at the rising of the sun. "Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified; He is risen: He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him."

I. I suppose that, to an angel's mind, "He is risen" would not express more wonder than the assertion of any of the processes of Nature. It could not—and the angel knew it—it could not be otherwise, for Christ could not but rise. "It was not possible," St. Peter says, "that He should be holden of it." Now remember that is not spoken about the soul; of that it would be obvious; but of the body—it could not choose but rise. The whole doctrine of the Resurrection is a doctrine of the body. The future and eternal life of the soul was known almost universally before Christ. The heathen knew and talked of it. But with very few exceptions, indeed, neither Jew nor Gentile knew anything of the coming to life again of the body till Christ rose. He was the Firstfruit of that science.

II. It is in the nature and constitution and obligation of every human body that it must rise. When you bury a body you simply, and you literally, sow a seed. You were born to rise—as much made to rise as any seed which you ever put into the ground. Resurrection is not properly a miracle. It is a grand, loving provision of the Counsel of God. And when we say of Christ, or say of any man, "He is risen," we only assert the necessary consequence of human being.

III. In the sight of God every believer is so united with Jesus Christ, that his whole being—his body, soul, and spirit—is a member of the body of Christ. In Christ, his Head, He died and suffered punishment upon the Cross. In Christ, his Head, he is buried. In Christ, his Head, he rises again at the last day. Therefore, where Christ goes he goes; whither Christ ascends he ascends; where Christ is he is. So that, in that He is risen, the whole Church is risen. And if so be you are a real living member in the mystical body of Christ, your resurrection and eternal life is so sure, that actually, in the mind of God, it was done that day when the angel said of you—*of you*, as you were then in the mystical body of Christ, "He is risen." It is an absolute, historical past.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 5th series, p. 94.

Chap. xvi., vers. 6, 7.

THE Address of the Angel to the Women at the Sepulchre.

These verses naturally divide themselves into two heads. The first head includes the information as given to the women; and the second, the commission with which they were charged. Note:—

I. The soothing character of the language which the angel employs; and the indirect yet forcible manner in which he recognises the devotedness which the women had displayed. "Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified." They had no need to be terrified at the glories of an angel, who could not be alienated by the indignity heaped on their Lord. They, who had come seeking the crucified Nazarene in the grave, were not unworthy to hold converse with celestial beings themselves.

II. But the women needed more than the quieting of those fears which the apparition of the angel had naturally excited. They wanted information as to the disappearance of Christ's body, and this was quickly furnished; for the heavenly messenger went on to say, "He is risen; He is not here; behold the place where they laid Him." There is something remarkable in the reasoning—if such it may be called—which is employed by the angel. He calls on the women to behold the place where their Lord's body had lain, as though its mere desertion were evidence enough of the fact of resurrection. And so in real truth it was, to all at least who, like the women, knew and considered the character and circumstances of the disciples of Christ. The supposition would be absurd to them,

and should be absurd to ourselves, that men situated as were the disciples, and who had displayed a timidity which could hardly be reconciled with affection for their Master, should have devised and executed a plan which would have been bold in the boldest, and which could scarcely have succeeded under the most favourable circumstances, and with the most copious appliances.

III. The commission with which these women were entrusted. The glad tidings of Christ's resurrection were not for themselves alone; the angel directed them to hasten at once and give intelligence of the glorious fact. As the first news of Death came by a woman, so by a woman came the first news of the Resurrection. Sinner and sinful must always merge in the preacher of the Gospel; seeing that through men and not through angels is the appointed instrumentality. When Mary Magdalene was sent with a message to the Apostles it may have been designed as evidence that previous guiltiness disqualifies no one for office of preacher. He may but discharge it with greater fidelity on the principle laid down by our Saviour Himself: "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,187.

REFERENCES: xvi. 6.—S. Clark, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 268; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., pp. 228, 239; G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines*, p. 85; *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 211.

Chap. xvi., ver. 7.—"Tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee."

LOVE'S Triumph over Sin.

I. Notice the loving message with which Christ beckons the wanderer back. If we try to throw ourselves back into the Apostle's black thoughts, during the interval between his denial and the Resurrection morning, we shall better feel what this love-token from the grave must have been to him. His natural character, as well as his love for his Master, ensured that his lies could not long content him. They were uttered so vehemently because they were uttered in spite of inward resistance. Overpowered by fear, beaten down from all his vain-glorious self-confidence by a woman-servant's sharp tongue and mocking eye, he lied; and then came the rebound. The same impulsive vehemence which had hurried him into the fault, would swing him back again to quick penitence, when the cock crew, and that Divine face, turning slowly from before

the judgment-seat with the sorrow of wounded love upon it, silently said, "Remember." We can fancy how that bitter weeping, which began so soon, grew more passionate and more bitter when the end came. We can understand how wearily the hours passed on that dreary Saturday. In his sorrow come the tidings that all was not over, that the irrevocable was not irrevocable, that perhaps new days of loyal love might still be granted, in which the doleful failure of the past might be forgotten. Think of this message (1) as a revelation of love that is stronger than death; (2) of a love that is not turned away by our sinful changes; (3) of a love which sends a special message because of special sin; (4) of a love which singles out a sinful man by name.

II. Notice the secret meeting between our Lord and the Apostle. What tender consideration there is in seeing Peter alone, before seeing him in the companionship of the others. And may we not regard this secret interview as representing for us what is needed on our part to make Christ's forgiving love our own? There must be the personal contact of my soul with the loving heart of Christ, the individual act of my own coming to Him, and as the old Puritans used to say, "my transacting with Him."

III. Notice the gradual cure of the pardoned Apostle. He was restored to his office, as we read in the supplement to John's Gospel. In that wonderful conversation, full as it is of allusions to Peter's fall, Christ asks but one question: "Lovest thou Me?" So the third stage in the triumph of Christ's love over man's sin is, when we, beholding that love following towards us, and accepting it by faith respond to it with our own, and are able to say: "Thou knowest that I love Thee."

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons preached in Manchester*, 2nd series, p. 58.

REFERENCES: xvi. 7.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 187; *Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 151; J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 315. xvi. 8.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. i., p. 341.

Chap. xvi., ver. 9.

OUR Risen Lord's Love for Penitents.

I. Marvellous was the acceptance of penitence by the Cross; but, if possible, more marvellous yet at the Resurrection. At the Cross the outcast and penitent was equalled to the holy and the pure; at the Resurrection she was even preferred. Holy

Scripture does not tell us how or when the Redeemer healed her sorrows, whose very soul the sword had pierced at His Crucifixion: it does say of the penitent, that to her Jesus appeared first. He who had passed by all the angel-hosts, and took not their nature, but ours, the last of His fallen creatures, passed by her through whom He took that nature to comfort her who had most degraded it. His mother, doubtless, He comforted by His Spirit; the penitent He comforts by His very Presence and His words. Oh, wondrous condescension of redeeming love! who rose early in the morning to seek her who, late though she had loved Him, then sought Him early; and as an earnest of His yearning tenderness for penitents first revealed His risen glories to a penitent, made her an apostle to Apostles, a comforter to His brethren.

II. The mercy of the Resurrection was even fuller than the mercy of the Cross which it completed. The mercy at the Cross was acceptance; the mercy at the Resurrection was not acceptance only, but enlarged grace, heavenly visitations, to be known by name to Jesus, called as His own, spoken to in the heart, to have one God with the Man Christ Jesus, one Father with the co-eternal Son. At the Cross Jesus promised that the penitent should be with Him; in the Resurrection Himself cometh, victorious over hell and death and Satan, to be with the penitent. Thou needest not, then, to sit down in weariness and hopelessness, whatever, of early years, thou hast lost, whatever grace thou hast forfeited, though thou hast been in a far country, far away in affections from Him who loved thee; and wasting on His creatures, nay, sacrificing on idol-altars with strange fire, the gifts which God gave thee that thou mightest be precious in His own sight. He who called Magdelene in her calleth thee. Be thy soul to thee as a empty tomb where Christ's lifeless body was once buried by thy sins, and now is not; be it that thou see nothing but darkness, feel nothing but the chillness and damp of the tomb, catch no ray of light, look again and discover no trace of Him, yet despair not. Mourn His absence, desire His Presence. The very desire *is* His Presence. He will appear unto thee by some comfort in prayer; by some secret stillness of the soul, or ray of light, though but for an instant; or by some thrill of joy on one steadfast purpose, henceforth to have no other object but to win Christ, to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

E. B. PUSEY, *Sermons for the Church's Seasons*, p. 340.

REFERENCES: xvi. 9.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 230;

G. E. L. Cotton, *Sermons in India*, p. 125; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 625; vol. xiv., No. 792; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 198. xvi. 9-11.—*Homilist*, new series, vol. iii., p. 619; H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 386. xvi. 10.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 86. xvi. 11-13.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 493. xvi. 12.—T. T. Shore, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 221; F. W. Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 408; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. ii., p. 9; W. Meller, *Village Homilies*, p. 168. xvi. 12, 13.—R. C. Trench, *Studies in the Gospels*, p. 324. xvi. 14.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 219; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 197; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 502.

Chap. xvi., ver. 15.—"And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

CHRIST'S Commission to His Apostles.

Introduction.—These words present four objects:—Work, Workmen, a Field for Work, and the Divine Master of the workmen.

I. Work. The work is preaching the Gospel. The power of speech is a wondrous faculty of man, lifting him above all speechless creatures, and placing him near to that God by whose word the heavens were made, and who created all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. Speech is reason's younger brother, and "a most kingly prerogative of man." It is a conduit through which a man's thoughts, and purposes, and feelings, flow out to his fellows. It is a window through which you may see into another's spirit. It is a key by which you may unlock the door of another's heart. It is a hammer by which you may break the purposes and the resolutions of others; and a fire by which you may ignite the passions of one man or of many; and by which you may consume the wood, hay, and stubble, of false notions and of erroneous opinions.

II. Look at the Workmen. Eleven are specially addressed. Judas is not here. Where is he? But who are these? They are all the children of Abraham concerning the flesh, and have been brought up under the various religious institutions of the Holy Land. This was, to some extent, education for their work, especially for their work among their own people. They had been taken from the least refined of the provinces of the Holy Land, and from the people whom the southerners despised for their illiterateness and coarseness; from the district, however, in which Jesus Christ had Himself

been brought up. This gave them sympathy with the common people, if not influence over them. They were men of ordinary secular occupations; several were fishermen, one was a tax-gatherer. There was not a priest among them, not a scribe, not a ruler. The acceptableness of their work and their success would be entirely independent of riches, or of high rank, or of elevated position, in any respect.

III. Look at the Sphere of their Toil. The dispensations of Divine mercy had for centuries been chiefly, if not entirely, confined to one people and to one land. God's priests ministered exclusively to the people in this land. God's prophets spoke almost entirely to the people in this land. But now preachers of a glorious Gospel are to leave this people and this land, and are to go into all the world. They are to begin their work in Jerusalem, and are to heap coals of fire upon the heads of the enemies of their Master, but Jerusalem is not to detain them. They are to labour in Judæa, and Samaria, and Galilee; but they may not tarry for life there, they are to go to the uttermost parts of the earth. The world is the sphere of these workmen's work. The world without the limitations of country, or of climate; the world without the distinctions of barbarism, and civilisation, and bondage, and freedom; the world irrespective of the boundaries of the world's kingdoms; the world as they saw it, Egypt, and the Isles of the Sea, and Greece, and Rome; the world as Jesus saw it, with America in His eye, although yet undiscovered; as He saw it from north to south, and from east to west.

IV. The Master of the Workmen. He who saith, "Go," came into the world. He who saith, "Go ye," Himself came; came not by deputy or proxy, but Himself came. He is the manifestation of the love of God; the Christ who died for the ungodly; the Jesus who was born to save, and whom God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour. He who saith, "Go unto the world to every creature," is the propitiation for the sins of the world.

S. MARTIN, *Rain upon the Mown Grass.*

THE Church of the Future.

If the Gospel is to be universal; if, in other words, Christ's ideas of human nature and human duty, and Divine nature and activity, are to become universal; it is because they have in them an adaptation to every stage and development of humanity, as to manner and customs—from the lowest dawn of intelligence

clear through to the time when we shall have scoured the heavens, and shall have understood the liturgy of every star, and when we shall know around and around the horizon everything that is within its bounds.

Consider what the realm of the Gospel is.

I. It is universal, universal in respect to time, universal in respect to place, and universal in respect to conditions. That which constitutes the marrow of the Gospel fits itself to human nature and human want everywhere and always. It declares (1) that all men are imperfect by ignorance, by infirmity, by weakness, and by voluntary wrong; (2) it assumes the universal adaptability of men to increment, to development, or increased knowledge; (3) it declares that God is a being setting Himself forth, in so far as a disclosure is made of His Nature, as the sun is set forth. The sun is to the world the centre of all life. God is the Sun; or, to take away the figurative construction of it, God is the Father.

II. The simplicity of the Gospel is only such in appearance. It has taken hold of the great root-facts of human existence, human nature, and human destiny. It emphasizes them. It does not organise a church. Christ never organised a Church, nor did He ever leave a plan on which the Apostles should organise a Church. Why should He have done so? The moment you bring men together with a common purpose it is a part of their very nature and competency to develop an organisation according to their want. Give to men a sense of their superiority; let them feel the swell of possible manhood; let them come under the consciousness of God's presence and love; let the same feeling be developed in them that God has toward them—and the social principle will make its own terms and gatherings. So as fast as men need this or that mode of worship they can supply it for themselves. There is no need of supplying it for them. The vast baggage which religion has brought down through the ages has been one of the great hindrances to the spread of the Gospel, and it will be one of the great hindrances to the spread of the Gospel to the end of time. Until you can take away sanctity from churches, from ordinances, from man-made creeds, and from every external observance, you have the Gospel in chains: it is not free; it is in bondage.

H. W. BEECHER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 25.

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The Training of the Twelve, p. 536. xvi. 15, 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 573; vol. xv., No. 900; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 225. xvi. 15-20.—H. M. Luckock, *Footprints of the Son of Man*, p. 391.

Chap. xvi., ver. 16.—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

We must all tremble when we hear those awful declarations in the Athanasian Creed, respecting the Catholic faith, such as, "Which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." And some are offended, and wish these sentences were not there. But if it sounds severe and uncharitable for the Church to speak in this way, then, no doubt, the same must be said of the Church of God in old times; and we shall find just the same difficulty with the Bible itself. The Old Testament, wherein we have the figure or pattern of God's Church set before us, is full of things quite of the same kind; of things that sound at first to unthinking men in these days as severe and uncharitable. Yet, surely, those ways, which we read of in the Old Testament, are the ways of God, and He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;" and all those things were "written for our learning." Why does God put into our mouths, in His house of prayer, such dreadful words respecting others, our fellow-creatures, perhaps no worse than ourselves?

I. These things might, indeed, appear to us quite irreconcilable with all that we know of God's lovingkindness, might seem to be great difficulties and stumbling-blocks if taken by themselves; but when they are set by the side of another vast and overwhelming doctrine, which is the very last of all that the heart of man is willing to believe, yet is the great foundation of all revealed truth, then we see that all things wonderfully agree together, and support each other. The doctrine I mean is this, that the wicked shall be cast into hell, and all the people that forget God; that a great part of mankind will have to depart into a place of everlasting fire, notwithstanding all the lovingkindness and infinite mercy of Almighty God to us.

II. Since, therefore, the Holy Scripture is so full throughout of what would sound to men of these days, if it were not there, as so severe, and awful, and uncharitable, it is quite consistent with this, that the voice of the Church also should speak out in so very fearful and strong a manner, so as to offend weak and carnal men, respecting the Catholic Faith. The Church, like a kind mother, calls aloud to her child when she sees it sporting

on the brink of a great precipice. The danger was all there before, but she declares it. Fire will burn, and water will drown, and he who falls over a precipice will be killed, although no one warned him, and, as it were, pulled him back rudely and forcibly from destruction: and so we find that the eternal danger is imminent respecting our not holding rightly the Catholic faith, although the Church of God did not, in mercy, ring it, as it were, aloud in our ears.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. x., p. 153.

REFERENCES: xvi. 16.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Easter to Ascension Day*, p. 425; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 281. xvi. 17, 18.—W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. ii., p. 281.

Chap. xvi., ver. 18.—"They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

THE Safety and Helpfulness of Faith.

I. Consider the safety which Christ offers. Notice it is a safety, not by the avoidance of deadly things, but by the neutralizing of them through a higher and stronger power. There is no such idle promise as that if a man believes in Christ a wall shall be built around his soul, so that the things out of which souls make sin cannot come to him. The Master knew the world too well for that. His own experience on the hill of His temptation was still fresh in His memory. He knew that life meant exposure, that sin must surely beat at every one of these hearts—nay, that the things, out of which sin is made, temptation, moral trial, must enter into every heart; and so He said, not, "I will lead you through secluded ways, where none but sweet and healthy waters flow;" but, "Where I lead you, there will be the streams of poison. Only if you have the vitality, which comes by faith in Me, your life shall be stronger than the poison's death; if you drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt you." One thing we see immediately in such a promise, one condition which belongs to its fulfilment. It is that only in the higher action and mission lay the safety from the lower influence; and, therefore, that the lower influence was to be powerless over the disciples only as they met it incidentally in the direct pursuance of their higher task. Only those temptations which we encounter in the way of duty, in the path of consecration—only those—has our Lord promised us that we shall conquer. He sends us out to live and work for Him. The chances of sin, which we meet while that Divine design of

life, the life and work for Him, is clear before us, shall not hurt us. When we forget that design, our arm withers, our immunity is gone.

II. He "shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Safety and helpfulness. He shall be safe, and he shall save others too. These two things go together, not merely in this special promise of the Saviour, but in all life. Safety and helpfulness. So is the whole world bound into a whole, so does the good that comes to any man tend to diffuse itself, and touch the lives of all, that these two things are true. First, that no man can be really safe, really secure that the world shall not harm and poison him, unless there is going out from him a living and life-giving influence to other men. And, second, that no man is really helping other men unless there is true life in his own soul. Both of these seem to me to be great and ever-present truths. "They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." If I read these words spiritually; if I make them a promise and a prophecy of that wonderful power which, in all times in all religious, spiritual life has had to extend itself, like fire, from any one point which it has already occupied, to everything within its reach which is inflammable, which is capable of the same burning life; it seems to me that the way in which the promise is fulfilled to us is by the clothing of the believing life with two qualities, which are expressed by these two words—Testimony and Transmission. (1) Life-giving lives bear testimony by the very fact of their own abundant life. They show the presence, they assert the possibility of vitality. And very often this is what souls, whose spiritual life is weak and low, need to have done for them. (2) Transmission: the highest statement of the culture of a human nature and of the best attainment that is set before it is, that as it grows better it grows more transparent, and more simple—more capable, therefore, of simply and truly transmitting the life and will of God which is behind it. On a life of obedience and faith God shines as the sun shines on a block of crystal, sending its radiance through the willing and transparent mass, and lighting it all into its utmost depths.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 333.

Chap. xvi., ver. 19.—"So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."

I. I SUPPOSE that our first impressions are to consider the

Ascension of our Lord as the very greatest event connected with His appearance on earth. To our own mind, undoubtedly, nothing could be so solemn, so exalting, as the changing this life for another; the putting off mortality and putting on immortality; and all this we connect with the thought of the removal from earth to heaven. And had Christ been as we are, His Ascension would have been spoken of very differently from what it is now; and the account of His Resurrection would have been justly deemed incomplete without it. But to Christ, if I may so speak, His Resurrection was natural, it was His death that was the miracle of His love. Surely, as we need not to be told that Lazarus died again after *his* resurrection, as we know that it follows, of course, because he was a man and no more; so we need not be told that Christ, after *His* Resurrection, ascended into heaven. We know that it follows, of course, for the dwelling of the Most High God is not in earth, but in heaven.

II. But we are told that He did ascend: and we are told it chiefly for the sake of two things that are told us with it. The one is contained in the text, "He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God;" the other is in the Acts of the Apostles: "Ye men of Galilee," said the angel to the Apostles, who were watching Him as He was taken up from them, "why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen Him go into heaven." In these two things consists, as it seems to me, the great usefulness of the account of our Lord's Ascension. He is gone away, to come again in like manner as we saw Him go into heaven. And when shall that coming be? We can only answer in His own words: "Watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." No speculation can be vainer than to inquire about the time of that coming, which is known to the Father only. But be the period long or short, our Lord has given us wherewithal to occupy ourselves till He does come: He has furnished us with a means whereby, for ever calling to mind His parting from us, we may look more anxiously for the hour of His return. He has given every man his work, and He has told us continually to break the bread and drink the cup of Christian communion, that we may show forth His death till He come.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 54.

Chap. xvi., vers. 19-20.

CHRIST'S Work for Man and with Man.

In one sense the Ascension was the end of Christ's emptying Himself for us of His glory; the end of His suffering, of His slow waiting while the will of God wrought itself out. The end had come. The great exaltation had succeeded. He had ascended up into the heaven where He was before.

I. But in another and higher sense it was not the end, and it is of great moment that we thoroughly realise this for the strengthening of our hearts in this our time of trouble. His work was not yet finished; rather, we may say, it had reached a grander stage of development than ever before. That sitting of His at the right hand of the Father was not a negative repose. Still the mystery of those words which He gave them—"My Father worketh hitherto"—still these were being fulfilled, although He had ascended up into heaven again, still He was doing, still He is doing, a work for man and with man.

II. A work for man. He sketches it out in many sayings to His disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you;" "In My Father's house are many mansions." These mansions in which humanity was not; those mansions in which the blessed spirits were, but to which a child of Adam had never yet mounted, to them He, the second Adam, the Head of the human family, ascended up that He might draw His brethren after Him. On His throne of mighty power He makes intercession, He pleads His death on Calvary. He presents in Himself the whole human family acceptable to the Father, because He is one with Him. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us," presenting each one of us who thus believes in Him as precious before the throne of His Father.

III. He is working not only for, but with, us. He has but imported into His work all the might of His omnipotence. He is at the right hand of power, and yet He is with us, beside us. As this is true of each separate soul, so is it true in the great world-history. All things have been ordered by Him for the elect's sake. While man is left free, each one to do as He will—a true free agent, and, therefore, truly responsible—that hand of power is shaping and moulding events. Ordering all things as the tide of time surges under His eye; each soul in that mighty tide moves as he will, yet the whole tide sways at His bidding, and the earth performs His will. While the ascension of our blessed Lord is, in one sense, the end, in

another and yet higher sense it is the beginning, the opening of the true kingdom of grace descending upon us with the Holy Ghost. Again, this presence of Christ is ever present to the soul, and is comfort to the afflicted. Thou hast a great temptation; thou hast fallen, but thou hast the Lord beside thee, and thou mayest lay thy burden upon Him, and thy tempted, weary, fainting soul may rest itself upon the Love which is beside thee.

BISHOP WILBERFORCE, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 542.

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